

Mastering Mounting



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One-Step Mounting and Laminating

It's always trendy to try something new that others are making money on, it's also called good business. That's why we read articles, attend seminars, and shop trade shows. This month's article may not be a fall trend, but one-step mounting and laminating is a money maker that should be part of your mounting and laminating repertoire. It is also a logical follow-up to last month's discussion of basic mounting and laminating techniques.

When bonding adhesives and laminates in small "bites" because of press size

limitations, it is best to mount first, then laminate (as discussed last month). But when using a press large enough to accommodate the size of the entire piece being framed, the process may be achieved with a single trip to the press. This adds profits since there will be two press charges, while saving labor time since all is achieved in one step.

Designing the Project

The project seen here involves an inexpensive 15³/₄" x 26³/₄" horse poster print of Chinese origin. Not an original, the image was printed on a lightweight 30# paper that had been backed with acidic corrugated cardboard and displayed in a Sumi brush shop in China. The corrugated lines of the cardboard backing clearly show as acid burn lines throughout the darker areas of the image (see Photo 1).

Conservation treatments for the acid burn are not an option for this particular poster image and it will be mounted and laminated rather than treated, matted, and glazed. Similar to the gilded scrolls showcased in this column last month, the unmatted look helps to preserve the slightly elongated Asian proportions of this Sumi ink horse painting.

A number of mouldings could have worked well with this piece, from natural or colored bamboo in assorted widths to contemporary metal. A narrow, black metal seemed to best enhance the Asian image and the final decision was between the profiles shown in Photo 2.

On the right is a 1" deep moulding with



Photo 1: Acid Burn—A detail of the Asian print clearly illustrates the acid burn lines in the dark inked sections of the image from the corrugated backing.

narrow $\frac{3}{16}$ " lip held flat against the laminated print. The profile on the left was the one selected. It is $1\frac{3}{8}$ " deep with a $\frac{7}{32}$ " lip that is lifted from the laminated print a full $\frac{3}{8}$ ". The added distance of the moulding from the print surface gives the frame just a little more weight when viewed from the diagonal to make a slightly bolder statement while still maintaining the desired minimalism when viewed head-on (see Photo 3). Also, the anodized finish of the selected moulding is less glossy, which goes better with the Sumi ink on the artwork and ultra matte laminate that will be used on its surface.

Selecting and Sizing Materials

A sheet of $\frac{3}{16}$ " Bainbridge Artcare acid free foamboard is the substrate. The adhesive of choice is a low temperature 160°F, neutral pH, porous, buffered tissue—Drytac Drychival. The laminate selected is Drytac ArtShield Matt UV, a heat-set vinyl with a flat matte finish. (see Photo 4). It also has a low bonding temperature of 185°F.

For ease of alignment and as a time saver, the print is mounted and laminated to a foamboard slightly larger than the image. Align both the adhesive tissue and the print onto the substrate and tack it in one small spot no larger than that of a dime in the center of one end (See Photo 5). Next, size the laminate. When sizing it, make certain to cut the laminate large enough to fully cover all of the tissue adhesive so none of the adhesive comes in contact with the sponge overlay used when bonding those materials in the press (See Photo 6).

Exposed adhesive will bond to the sponge overlay during mounting,



Photo 2: Moulding Options—The Matte Black anodized Nielsen Profile 34-21 (left) is $1\frac{3}{8}$ " deep with a $\frac{7}{32}$ " surface lip that is $\frac{3}{8}$ " down to the print. The Nielsen Profile 3-50 (right) is 1" deep with a small narrow $\frac{3}{16}$ " lip that lays flat against the laminated print.



Photo 3: Completed Framed Horse—The added depth of chosen moulding, plus the $\frac{3}{8}$ " surface height from the image face gives the frame just a little more weight, while still maintaining the desired minimalism. (Moulding compliments of Nielsen Bainbridge.)

resulting in divots of foam being torn from the overlay sheet. It rarely damages the lamination process, but will damage the foam by tearing chunks from it, rendering it unusable as a full sheet for use on later laminating projects.

Aligning the Laminate

Once the adhesive and print have been tacked to the board and the laminate has been sized large enough to cover the adhesive, fold back the top edge of the protective laminate liner exposing the lightly tacky backing of the laminate (see Photo 7). The larger the sheet of laminate the wider the strip should be folded



Photo 4: Selecting Materials—A slightly oversized sheet of Bainbridge Artcare $\frac{3}{16}$ " acid free foamboard will be used with Drytac Drychival mounting tissue and Drytac ArtShield Matt UV heat-set vinyl laminate.



Photo 5: Tacking—Align the adhesive tissue and print onto the substrate and tack it in one small spot no larger than that of a dime in the center of one end.

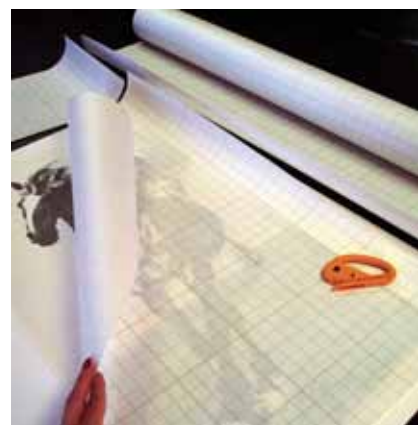


Photo 6: Covering All the Adhesive—When sizing the laminate make certain to cut it large enough to fully cover all of the tissue adhesive so none of the adhesive comes in contact with the sponge overlay when bonding.

back. The light tack of the laminate sheet will help to hold the film in place for ease of handling and placing into the press. It is also what makes one-step mounting and laminating easy to achieve.

Always stick the tacky end of the laminate to the end of the print that has been tacked to the substrate. On small projects this allows the remaining liner to be easily removed without it slipping or moving around. On larger images once the laminate has been squared to the image and the end pressed in place, flip the laminate over that attached end face-down. With the laminate liner face-up the exposed folded liner works as a tab handle to grasp for removal of the remaining liner from the applied laminate (see Photo 8).

Some manufacturers advise you to pull the liner from beneath the laminate after attaching it at the far end so as not to expose the sticky backing to the open air, thus attracting particles and dirt. By lightly folding the laminate over at the tacked end, the laminate backing remains covered and is still protected from attracting dirt.

Standing at the end of the project, allow the substrate to bump up against you as the liner is gently pulled from the laminate, rolling it as it is removed (see Photo 9). Once the laminate is in place, check for trapped air that could create creases. Slide your fingers lightly across the surface of the film, from center to outer edges, to gently assist air in moving to outer sides. Do not aggressively burnish; a light-feathered fingertip is best.

Since laminates are repositionable, if large bubbles are anticipated, gently lift the end of the laminate, folding in a soft, uncreased fold back

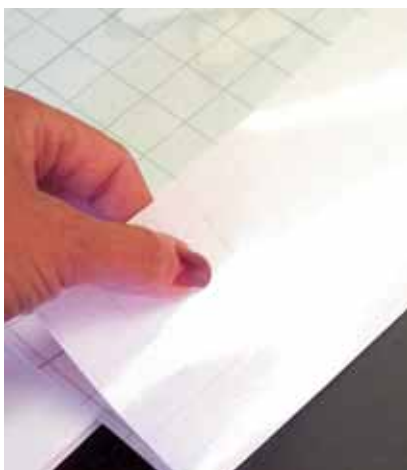


Photo 7: Folding Back the Laminate Liner—Fold back the top edge of the protective laminate liner exposing the lightly tacky laminate. The larger the sheet of laminate, the wider the strip should be folded back.

onto itself. Be very careful not to create a hard edged crease, or what I refer to as a “lightning bolt” crease. This will never go away during mounting. With the a gloved hand, bone burnisher, or clean fingernail tips roll the laminate back into place and the large bubbles should be gone (see Photo 10).

Check again for trapped air by running your fingertips gently across the laminate surface (see Photo 11). This step is not meant to burnish or to rub the laminate in place, but rather just to check for potentially large creases or air bubbles.

In the Mounting Press

The project is now ready for its one trip to the press. The mounting package (from bottom to top) consists of release paper, substrate, dry mount tissue adhesive, horse print, laminate, sponge overlay, topped with another sheet of release paper (see Photo 12). It is placed in the center of a 40"x60" VacuSeal hot vacuum press at 185°F for seven minutes. If the laminate were to come out with small white dots or silvering, it was either not in the press long enough or was not hot

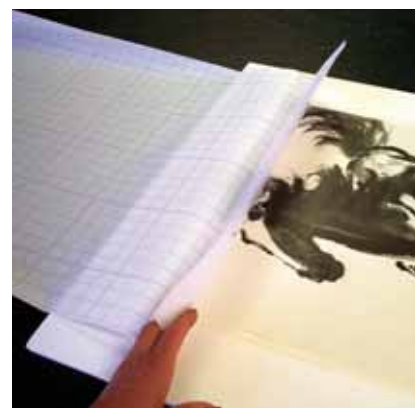


Photo 8: Attaching the Tacky Laminate—On larger images once the laminate has been squared to the image and pressed in place on the exposed tacky laminate end, then flip the laminate over that attached end.



Photo 9: Rolling Off the Liner—Standing at the end of the project, allow the substrate to bump against you as you gently pull the remaining liner from the laminate, rolling it as it is pulled toward you.



Photo 10: Re-aligning to Remove Air—With the tips of a gloved hand, a bone burnisher, or your clean fingernails roll the laminate back into place and the large bubbles will generally have been taken care of.



Photo 11: Checking for Air Bubbles—Check again for trapped air by running your fingertips gently across the laminate surface.

enough. As with any mounting, this project can go back into the press for additional time but it must go into the press for the initial seven minutes plus added time (maybe three more). It is always smarter to opt for a little longer time than to have to reheat again. The end result... beautiful!

Laminate Chat

The sponge overlay has three basic purposes: to allow even pressure to all highs and lows of any laminating project; to help transport air through its open cell, textured surface to the edges of the mounting; and to slow the bonding time to allow all trapped air to press from between the layers.

This particular print is a very thin porous paper and a non-perforated, heat-set film was able to be used as the laminating layer. If the image had been glossy, coated, or obviously a nonporous surface, then it would have required a perforated laminate to allow for air to escape from the center areas of this large image prior to bonding. A perforated vinyl laminate has tiny air holes throughout the sheet. These holes allow the air to easily be compressed from between nonporous layers, then melt together



Photo 12: In the Press—The mounting package bottom to top consists of release paper, substrate, dry mount tissue, horse print, laminate, sponge overlay, topped with another sheet of release paper

into a solid laminate sheet towards the end of the bonding process.

Laminates may be purchased either as pre-perforated or non-perforated rolls that may be manually perforated as the need arises. The advantage of a pre-perforated roll is having the confidence that it will laminate over any surface with no worries. The disadvantage is the limitation of some creative applications using laminates such as leather-look, comtempo panel designing, faux glass etching, or re-texturing that may pick up the look of the holes from the laminate film or the liner during the time in the mounting press. (For more on these techniques see, *Creative Mounting, Wrapping and Laminating*, available from the PFM PubCo Bookstore.)

Pricing and Profit Potential

The pricing and profit potential of mounting and laminating in one step involves basic math. Laminating charges are the same as dry mounting charges. When dry mounting, the price should include the materials, labor, overhead, and profit. The materials include the substrate and adhesive; labor is the time it takes to execute; overhead is

the floor space, cost of equipment, electricity, etc.; and profit makes it all worthwhile.

When pricing for laminating the same factors are included as above, the only change being the materials are for the laminate only. I suggest \$20 for the mounting, \$20 for the laminating. Two separate processes, two charges. Laminate film runs slightly higher than tissue adhesive, but since the substrate has already been covered in the mounting charge, the price easily covers additional materials.

Basic mounting and laminating will always reflect two charges, one for each step regardless of whether there are two trips to the heat press, or as a one-step mounting. It stands to reason if the print is mounted and laminated in one step, there is no second set of overhead costs, allowing for additional profit. There will be some labor because of setting up the layers and aligning everything more carefully in the press, but nonetheless there will be two charges.



Photo 13: Trimming to Size—The laminated print is trimmed to size and readied to be placed in its metal frame.

When Is One Step Appropriate?

The concept of one step mounting and laminating will always be up to the individual framer's discre-

tion, and the customer is not involved in this planning. This has nothing to do with pulling the wool over somebody's eyes, but rather the confidence and skill levels of the framer who is doing the laminating.

Small items are a no brainer... easy profits. But personally I will mount, then laminate large items (In general, 16"x20" or larger) just to be safer and not tempt fate. A good indicator of whether or not to attempt a one step lamination is the porosity and/or size of the print being laminated. Never gamble. Always be certain of the outcome; otherwise the quick one-step version will not only lose your added profits, but could cost you a replacement print. ■

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Mounting Editor, owns Designs Ink in Tehachapi, CA, featuring commercial custom framing, fine art/graphic design, and industry consulting. Specializing in mounting, matting, design creativity, and fine art, she works with industry leaders and has taught for the National Conference. She has written two books on mounting: "The Mounting and Laminating Handbook" (now in its second edition) and "Creative Mounting, Wrapping, and Laminating." She can be contacted at www.designsinkart.com.