

# Cutting Unusual Mats

compiled by Anne Vázquez

*Creative and customized matting is just one of the ways that you can offer something that customers can't find elsewhere. This article features matting designs by two frame shops that reflect that type of creativity. This is just a sampling of the possibilities.*

*The first two designs were created by Kathleen Bergeron, co-owner of Rockyby's Custom Framing with Rick Bergeron in Coeur d'Alene, ID. The third design was created by Ira Freinle, CPE, co-owner of Creations 'n Things with Berenyce Freinle in Emerson, NJ.*

## On Safari

**What Framed:** "Makulu," an open edition print of two giraffes.

**Materials Used:** Print was dry mounted to foamboard. Then framed with Larson-Juhl Primitive series moulding; Larson-Juhl Primitive series fillet; Crescent suede mat in antelope, Tru Vue Conservation Clear glass.

**From the Designer:** I have framed this print a number of times and always felt that I could do something much more dynamic than my customers had previously wanted. The mother giraffe's neck extends out of the picture at the top and I thought that it would be fun to extend it visually onto the mat. I thought about painting,



*The top border of the suede mat used in this design was hand carved to extend the stretch of the giraffe's neck.*

using a textured paper, or even splicing another mat into the space, but nothing really seemed to be "it."

In the past, I had tried peeling the colored layer from regular mats and been satisfied with the results. So, for this project, I decided to try that technique on the suede mat. I chose "antelope" as it was the closest in color to the giraffe's spots, which was what I needed to carry out this design plan.

I traced the giraffe's neck from the print and then penciled in corresponding spots on the tracing paper. I didn't want pencil marks on the suede so I traced the design from the front of the tracing using a burnishing bone and pressing

just hard enough to get a faint line. I then used an X-acto knife to excise the suede and remove the suede *between* the spots (not to create the spots). I did find out (the hard way) that cutting too deeply revealed the white core. Cutting just through the suede left a slightly yellow layer which worked better than white would. I supposed the core could be colored, but I hadn't done any experiments to determine that.

I decided on the Primitive moulding because it seemed perfect for the piece. The print is only 11"x14" so I decided I'd need to make my mat wide to balance with the 3/8" moulding. The mat was slightly bottom weighted, with

the top and two side borders at 3<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub>" and the bottom being 4<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub>".

**Other Facts:** Overall dimensions of the finished piece were 28"x31<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>". Retail price was \$621. The matting treatment added \$92 to the price (as opposed to a regular single mat).

## *Go with the Flow*

**What Framed:** "River of Time," a signed, limited edition by Dot Bardarson of Seward, AK which is her interpretation of the Exit Glacier and River near Seward.

**Materials Used:** Larson-Juhl Vienna moulding; Top mat, Bainbridge, Stone; Inner mats, Crescent Blue Note and Artique, Botanical; Tru Vue Conservation, Clear glass; foamboard; and Mylar mounting pockets.

**From the Designers:** This print is from our personal collection of Alaskan art. When we purchased it from the gallery, it was framed simply in a metal frame and double matted with just a hint of river lines extending onto the mat. The mats were cut with regular bevels and did not match the lines in the print, which was distracting.

I felt I could improve the design, but cognizant that my work would change the artist's intent. I called her and asked if she would allow me to expand the treatment by using additional mat layer and color. She was very gracious and gave permission.



*There is a feeling of continuity throughout this framing design, which was achieved with the extension of the river onto the matting treatment.*

Using a clear tracing film and a soft pencil, I drew the outline of the print and the lines of the river that I wanted to extend into the mat. I had already cut rectangular openings in the three mats to be used, so I then decided which lines to transfer to the back of each mat. I had to remember to flip the tracing film and redraw the design which transferred the pencil to the mat. Some logistics were involved to ensure that each successive layer's, reverse beveled edge was hidden from sight. I used a Dahle cube to execute the curved cuts.

**Other Facts:** Overall dimensions of the finished piece were 22<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub>"x32". Retail price was \$409. The matting treatment added \$108 to the price (as opposed to a regular single mat).

## *Spring Inspires*

**What Framed:** The piece seen on the next page is a counted cross-stitch entitled "Spring." It was created by a customer using various colors of cotton floss and accented with small colored crystal beads.

**Materials Used:** We selected a mat color that complemented the dress, and a gold frame to highlight the woman's hair. The mat was a Crescent suede French Lavender. The moulding needed to be formal enough to support the design of the cross-stitch. We decided upon this frame from Decor Moulding and Supply, with a <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>" width.

**From the Designer:** The customer who made this piece usually brings in a new piece each month. Therefore, we strive to make something unique about each framing design. If we had created a simple rectangular mat opening, not only would the design not be unique, but there would be a relatively large empty area on the right side over the area of the skirt in the image.

To create the mat, we first mounted the needlework centered on acid-free mounting board. We then covered the mounted needlework with a sheet of tracing paper. Using a compass with very soft lead and set to 1", we traced the outside of the skirt shape keeping the compass at right angles to the outline. We turned the tracing paper over and taped it to the back of the mat. Using a handheld mat cutter, we cut the shape of the skirt.

We finished the mat by making the straight cuts on a standard mat cutter. Rather than setting the mat guides to a measured dimension, we fitted the blade to the curved cut and adjusted the mat guide to the location of the mat. This way we avoided any steps where the straight and curved cuts joined.

**Other Facts:** Overall dimensions of the finished piece was 18"x25½". The basic mat border was 3½". The mat width was picked to allow the skirt design to be cut into it without cutting too close to the frame and having a very narrow mat border.

Retail price was \$346. The special mat cut added about \$100 to the basic retail. ■



*The rich purple of the mat and the graceful curves of the cuts at the lower right were used to enhance this counted cross-stitch.*

*To read about more creative mat cutting ideas, look up these articles on the PFM website—[www.pictureframing-magazine.com](http://www.pictureframing-magazine.com): “The Cathedral Mat,” by Greg Perkins, CPF, July 1999; and, “The Kobe Corner Mat,” by Valerie McClure, CPF, February 1999.*