

# Deckled Edges

So what happened in my childhood that would make me want to tear paper into strips and attach it to mats, you ask? I could delve into the paper traumas of my life, but really, who cares? It makes the art look cool, and it's fun! As always, when designing for the booth for Wild Apple, Laurie Chester encourages me to have fun, and if it helps me work through some paper fetish... so much the better!

It all started with Chris Paschke's series of the Four Seasons (see Photo 1). In the original, she layered Japanese papers and then painted her signature Oriental characters. (At least that's what this framer thinks she did). While designing the matting for these prints, I happened upon the exact paper that Chris had used (again, in my little framer mind, I'm sure it's exactly the same paper). The paper I found is called Kasuiri, and I got it from Daniel Smith. They have a great selection of papers and you can see most of them on their web page at [www.danielsmith.com](http://www.danielsmith.com).

I started with a large white mat, leaving 2" showing

## A soft look for matting

between the image and the mat window. This left room for the 1½" strips of paper that I tore off of the edge of the sheet, using the deckled edge only. Using ATG tape, I

attached the paper to the underside of the mat, leaving 1" showing lengthwise first, then widthwise, so the paper overlapped in the corners, echoing the treatment in the artwork.

Next, to add a shadow, I cut another mat with smaller margins than the mat on top (in this case 1¾" all around) and attached it to the underside of the top mat. As a result, the paper floats an ⅛" off of the piece, creating the same shadow seen in the art.

The margins for the top mat are 3" on the top and sides and 3½"

along the bottom. So with the added width of the torn paper, that mat is 4" top and sides and 4½" on the bottom. The outside dimensions of the mat measure 20" x 20½".

For the frame, I used a flat 2" profile in poplar and painted it matte black. I keep regular black acrylic house paint on hand and then change the finish by adding an



Photo 1: The deckled edges of the paper attached to the underside of the white matboard add dimension to the piece, as well as echoing the texture in the artwork.

by Kathy Mann

acrylic medium to it (in this case with a matte finish). Often I will soften the harshness of straight black by adding a small amount of a brown color. My favorite brown is raw umber. The eye can't really tell that it's not exactly black, but it adds some warmth to the absence of color.

## Venturing Out

As with any new idea, there is a progression, or better said, a learning curve. The next time I used the torn paper "trick" was for another set of Chris' prints (see Photo 2). The first curve in the path of learning came when I wanted the paper to match the print, which is green. I could have used watercolors, but I used what I have the most of—acrylic paint.

In this case, I took some light green (almost mint green actually) and added some brown to it, or more specifically, raw umber. Now, because I've always wanted to be Martha Stewart (though if you saw my house, you'd know it will never happen), I will describe how to get the paper the right shade of green as I think Martha would. Keep in mind that I also think I know how Chris Paschke makes her art and I'm probably wrong on both counts. But here goes.

Take one tablespoon of mint green acrylic paint, add ½ teaspoon of raw umber acrylic paint, mix thoroughly with a plastic spoon

(or a ½" wide scrap of foam board torn off the end of something sticking out of the trash works too). Thin this mixture with a ½ cup of water. Apply this wash to the already torn strips of Japanese paper with a 1" foam paint brush. I had to do it twice to get the proper tone, but better to start



Photo 2: Here, the color of the deckled edge paper was modified to coordinate with the coloring in the artwork.

light and have to make it darker than the other way around.

This is a good reason to have extra pieces of torn paper handy for your own curves on the path of learning. A good place to put the scraps of paper while they're drying is on a narrow scrap of acrylic. (As you can see I have trouble throwing anything away.) Once the strips dried, I attached them just like I did for the first Paschke "Season" prints.

The mat margins on this design are 1¾" for the top and

sides and 2¼" on the bottom, for a finished size of 12" x 16½"

## Discovering

For the next two prints, I also used the deckled edge design, but I made a discovery which enabled me to leap over several curves on the path of learning. This find is called an Art Deckle Edge. I found mine at Kate's Paperie in New York City. Their number is 888-941-9169. I often get papers from them, though all the papers featured here are from Daniel Smith.

For these next two images I couldn't use the torn paper strips technique. It really needed to be a full "window." And that's where my new toy came in. For the Day Lily series by Jane Mosse Designs (see Photo 3), I wanted to echo the deckled edge on the print.

I used cream Gampi paper and cut it to the exterior size of the top mat, which is 18" x 21½". Then, with a very sharp blade, I cut out the window, using margins of 3½" on the top and sides, and 4" on the bottom. I then laid the "mat" on a scrap of acrylic bigger than the mat itself.

With the very same sharp blade, I cut into the corners of the window ½". Using a watercolor brush, I applied clean water to the window edge, going in about ¾". Then I put the new toy, a straight edge with an irregular metal "deckled" edge to it, ½" in from the edge of the window, matching up my cut corners, and gently tore the ½" excess paper away, pulling up against the metal edge.

This Gampi paper has long

fibers in it which make a lovely feathery inside edge to the mat. When it was dry, I applied antique gold Rub and Buff very lightly with my finger so the gold picked up the fibers in the paper.

Now that the edge of the mat had been trimmed down ½", the margins were 3" on the top and sides and 3½" on the bottom. I cut a mat out of white 8-ply rag board with 2¼" margins on the top and sides and 2¾" on the bottom.

I then attached the feathered/deckled mat to the underside of the white mat and did that same smaller mat underneath to create the shadow. Cutting up mat-board scraps in strips and attaching them underneath works just as well and uses up some of that stuff I refuse to throw away.

### Expanding Horizons

As I travelled further along the learning curve, I wondered how it would look if I put the deckled mat *on top of*, instead of *under* the mat. The main problem I anticipated would be that the thin handmade paper would buckle over time. It did work on the Woodland Floral Series (see Photo 4), mainly because they are relatively small (11" x 12¾").



Photo 4: A different approach was used here, with the deckled edges placed on top of the matboard, instead of under it.



Photo 3: Here the deckled edge paper interacts with the weathered look of the moulding chosen for the design.

I applied the Kasuiri paper in the same manner as I did the feathered mat from the Day Lily Series, but this time I made the window ½" larger all around than the window I made in the brown corrugated mat which was underneath (margins 2" on the top and sides, 2½" on the bottom). The most important trick to remember is to trim ⅙" from the outside edge of the handmade paper mat. This allows some release of the pressure created when the acrylic presses down on the paper as the framing brads are applied.

It's a great look, but I haven't reached the curve yet that teaches me how to apply it to larger pieces. Until I figure that one out, I won't use this treatment on anything larger than 12" x 14"

The frame I used on this series is a veneer. It's unusual because it has a matte finish which you don't often find on veneer mouldings. It really complemented that "natural bark" look on this print.

*(Other sources for the type of paper used in these frame designs include Harvey Fabrics, The Vicky Schober Co., and Crescent Cardboard. For more information, refer to the 2001 PFM Annual Directory, pg. 178.)*

*Art courtesy of Wild Apple Graphics. ■*