

A Different Kind of Mat

by Jo Houtz

When framing a picture, each element adds something to the overall design. The customized mats in the following designs are an example of this. The two-fold look of these mat designs give added dimension to my watercolor paintings that I frame this way. By adhering a decoratively cut mat on top of a base mat, the design possibilities open up.



Photo 1: The dual color of the matting, as well as the watercolor embellishment, highlights the artwork.

Snow Scene and Birdhouse

1. First, select your colors and trim both the top and bottom mats, so that the bottom mat is $\frac{1}{16}$ " smaller than the top mat—both in height and width. (The purpose of cutting the liner matboard is to keep it from interfering with the measurements on the first set of cuts.)
2. Set your mat guides to produce the desired window size.
3. Cut all four sides of the window of your top mat.
4. Do not remove the window yet.
5. Apply double-sided tape to the window portion and along the inner cut of the mat that will be the lower portion of the artwork (see Figure 1).
6. Apply the bottom mat (face-down) to the top mat allowing just $\frac{1}{32}$ " all the way around.

Figure 1:

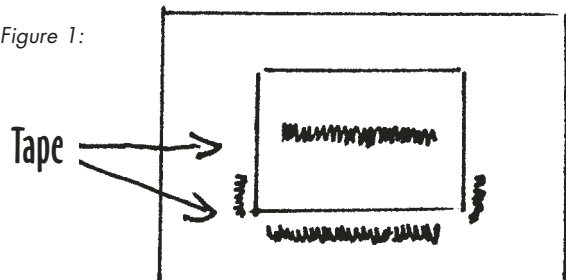


Figure 2:

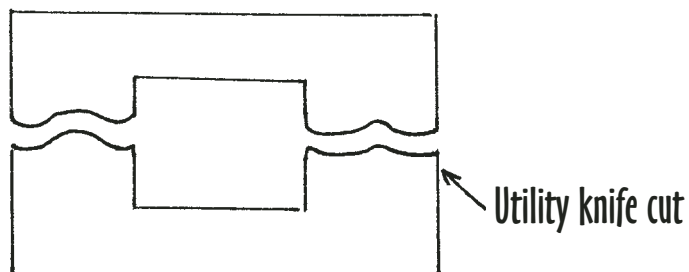




Photo 2: By using white matboard on the lower portion of this piece, the snow theme permeates the design.

7. Next, set your mat guides to the selected size of the bottom mat.
8. Cut the four sides of the window of the bottom mat, using your hand to support the untaped portions to avoid slipping.
9. Pop out the window.
10. Gently pull apart the top and bottom mats.
11. Take the top mat (face-up) and cut through each side with a utility or an X-acto knife (see Figure 2).
12. Turn the top mat to the reverse side and place two-sided tape along inner edge (see Figure 3).
13. Place the lower portion of the top mat onto the bottom mat. (You can save the other half of the cut mat for another job.)

Figure 3:

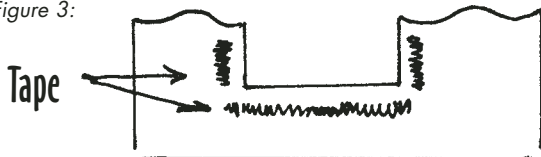
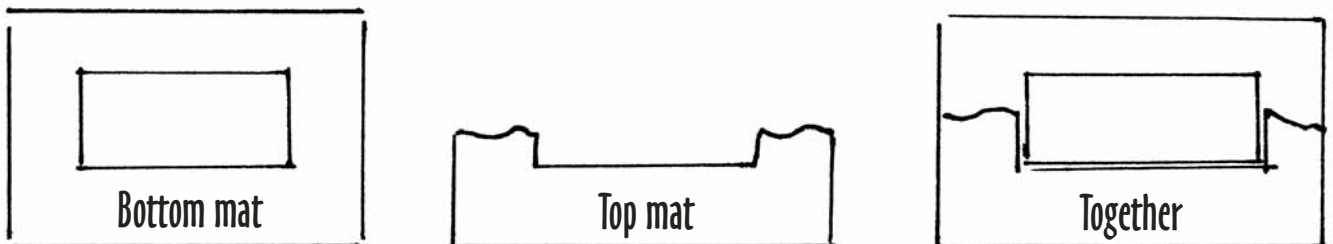


Figure 4:



Autumn Leaves

- 7-10. These steps are the same as for the Snow Scene and Birdhouse.
11. Trace the random leaf pattern to the face of the top mat. (Before tracing the pattern, the yellow mat was embellished with additional autumn colors. I used watercolors and a toothbrush to apply the colors.)
12. With an X-acto knife, cut out the pattern. Keep your blade on an angle and try to keep that angle consistent. However, it doesn't need to be perfect.
13. When finished cutting, take off burrs and rough edges with very fine sandpaper. Your burnisher may also be used.
14. Turn the mat face down and place two-sided tape along the inner edges.
15. Adhere the top mat onto the bottom mat (see Figure 4).

By experimenting with and showcasing these mat designs, you can open your customers' eyes to more framing options. By using this techniques to create mat shapes for other images that may come in your shop, there's a long list of possibilities. ■

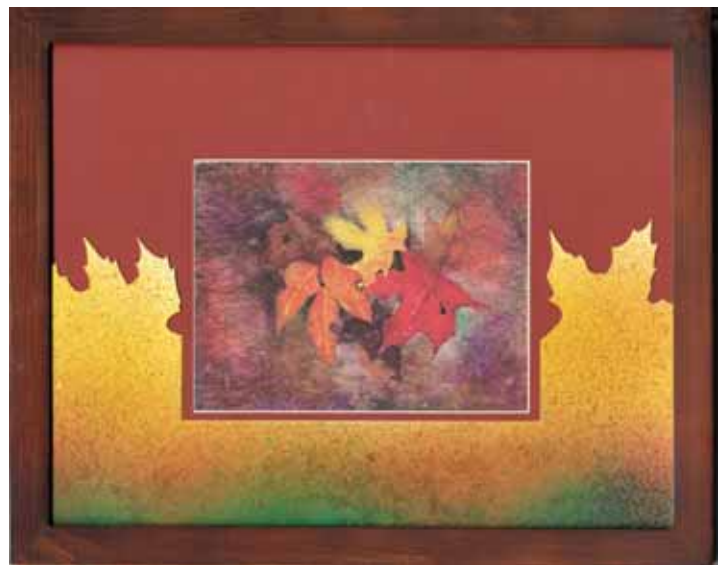


Photo 3: The lower half of this mat design was embellished with watercolors applied by "spraying" with a toothbrush.