

# The Cut Velvet Mat

by Kathy Mann



Whenever I begin the design for one of Wild Apple's prints I do pretty much what you do with a customer's piece. I have to keep in mind where it will be hanging in the booth, what it will be hanging next to, the decor, and of course, what will make the artwork shine. This print, "Green Shoe with Feathers," by Isabelle de Borchgrave was challenging because of the textural quality of the Victorian ladies' slipper covered with ferns. I wanted to pick up on the Victorian aspect of the art, but also show off the whimsical quality of the ferns.

I decided on a cut velvet fabric mat with a bead fillet, Williamson "Valencia" #19-0420-1263 and Williamson "Quin-

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tana" #34-09059-1670 for the frame. To add to the textural quality of the piece I put the glazing under the mat instead of on top, as you're "supposed" to do. It created more of an upholstered look.

I found the fabric that I used for the mat at a fabric store that specializes in upholstery seconds and overruns. I've found some wonderful stuff there at a fraction of the cost of framing fabrics. Plus it is the latest in home decorating style. The only drawback is that it's almost impossible to get any more of any particular fabric after the initial purchase. My solution to that problem is buy lots of

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it. (So don't be surprised if you see me wearing a jacket made out of this green velvet in Wild Apple's booth at Galleria in March 2000.)

This particular fabric is a cut velvet that was originally a soft green. It was a little too green for the browner green of the ferns. To create more of a brown antiqued tone on the fabric, I took Antique Gold Rub and Buff and thinned it out with paint thinner.

First I cut a square of the velvet with an overlap of about  $\frac{3}{4}$ " on each side of the mat. Using a foam brush I really soaked the face of the velvet with the paint. I then let it dry overnight in a well-ventilated area before I put it on the mat. To get the darker tone I needed I made sure to apply the fabric to the mat so the nap was upside down, or going up.

So far I've done two things that might be frowned upon. The first is to put the mat on top of the glazing. The mat is intended to create an airspace between the glazing and the art so moisture doesn't collect on the glass and get absorbed into the art. The second naughty thing I did was to put the velvet on the piece upside down. The nap is supposed to be applied going down, so it is smooth when you run your hand over it. Since the piece is an open edition and can be replaced if need, it isn't necessary for me to worry about conservation quality framing. As

far as the nap being upside down—I like being wild and crazy.

I used the basic principle for hand wrapping a linen mat, but I didn't dry mount it to the board for fear of "squishing" the velvet. I cut the mat with the bevel on the face of the mat, as opposed to the back, as I would usually do with a mat that will have a fillet on the inside of the window. That little shadow that the bevel creates, which would make a dip with a linen mat, just makes it look more upholstered with the heavier fabric.

The original painting was done on antique paper with a deckled edge, which needed to be shown, so I left  $\frac{3}{4}$ " space around it inside the window;  $\frac{1}{4}$ " of that would be filled by the fillet, leaving  $\frac{1}{2}$ " of space around the artwork. The image size is  $4\frac{3}{4}$ " x  $6\frac{1}{2}$ " and the mat window size is  $6\frac{1}{4}$ " x  $7\frac{1}{2}$ " with mat margins of 2" on the top and sides and  $2\frac{1}{2}$ " on the bottom.

After cutting the window out of regular matboard, I applied a line of ATG tape to each side, then placed the mat face down on the back of the painted velvet. I cut a square of fabric out the middle of the window, leaving  $\frac{3}{4}$ " border next to the mat window. I then cut a diagonal slit that goes to within  $\frac{1}{8}$ " of the corner. (Don't overcut; you can always go back and trim it.) More ATG tape is on the window edge and I used a small matboard scrap to push the  $\frac{3}{4}$ " overlap onto the back of the mat. With the mat still face down and using a new blade in my mat knife, I trimmed off any excess velvet around the edges. If the blade is not really sharp it can pull the fabric and make it crooked. The mat was then finished, except for the fillet.

I ordered the fillet an inch larger than needed and trimmed it to fit using a fillet cutter. I like to tuck the fillet under the velvet to add to the upholstered feel. (Be careful to measure each piece before cutting, as any mat may be off by a little, and  $\frac{1}{8}$ " space will show and make the off-squareness apparent.) I put  $\frac{1}{4}$ " ATG tape on the flat part of the fillet. It doesn't hold that well on the velvet, but it will work well enough for you to attach the matboard scraps (top and sides:  $1\frac{1}{2}$ "; bottom: 2") to the back to build up around the fillet. Then regular tape goes from the fillet to the matboard scraps, which are held on with

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ATG tape. This whole package—velvet, fillet, mat and matboard scraps—is about ¼" thick.

It is possible to make this matting style archival by adding another mat that is narrower than the top one, and placing it between the glazing and the art, with margins of 1¾" for the top and sides and 2" for the bottom. It wouldn't show under the mat and would create the airspace needed for an original piece of art. You would need a deeper moulding than the one I used here, or need to add an extender to this profile. But if you are using a poster, as I did, then just place the glass on top of the print, the mat on top of the glass, and pop it into the frame.

The print is drymounted on a piece of ½" foam board cut larger than needed. I centered the mat on top of the piece, traced it all around with a pencil, then cut

to that line.

When I frame for Wild Apple I always use acrylic instead of glass because of breakage and weight issues that arise from shipping and hanging in a booth with hook and loop tape. But for a customer who will be hanging this on their wall, glass is fine.

The frame was cut to 10¾" x 11¾" with ½" allowance, glued and v-nailed and attached to the velvet mat with a brad nailer. Backing would be kraft paper attached with ATG tape, small mirror hangers and wire. Bumpons on the lower corners, and a complimentary picture hanger! ■

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*Kathy Mann of Vermont Handmade Frames designs and builds the framing for Wild Apple Graphic's trade show booths.*