

The Reverse Bevel: Its Use in

One of the most fundamental mat cutting techniques is the reverse bevel. It provides an additional dimension in design, and can help solve some of the more difficult framing problems when combined with inlaid mats (see *PFM* January 1999).

Let's look at a few situations where a reverse bevel would be most effective:

- When matting pastels, using the reverse bevel will prevent chalk particles from falling onto and discoloring an exposed bevel. Combine the reverse bevel with an inlaid mat, and you can achieve multiple colored matting as well without multiple bevels.

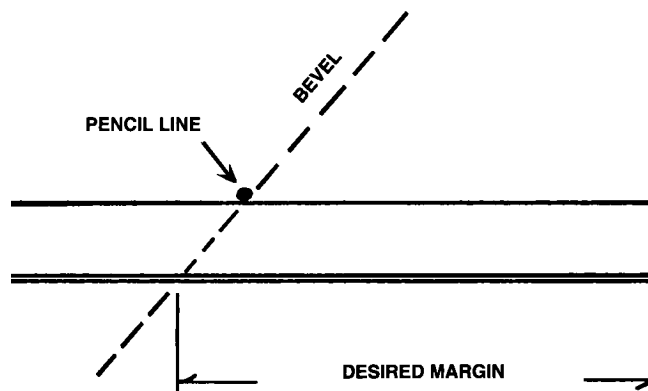
- When using a mix of matboard core colors, you do not always want the mix to show. You can show only one—or none—of the bevels by using reverse bevels, and eliminate a potentially distracting design element.

- When making a fabric-covered or hand-wrapped mat, a reverse bevel will yield a sharper edge. It will also eliminate the little gap in the corners and minimize frays in the fabric in the corners.

For most situations, there are basically two different methods of

cutting reverse bevels:

The first method is to simply draw lines where you want to opening to be cut on the back of the mat. Then remove the mat guide and place the mat, face down, so that the margin area of the mat will be under the cutting bar. Align the pencil line with the cutter bar and cut. The results will be a window opening



This figure shows the relation of the pencil line to the mat margin.

with a reverse bevel. Cutting a reverse bevel using pencil lines requires a degree of skill in using your mat cutter. You also have to develop a feeling for the right alignment of the pencil line to the edge of the mat cutter bar.

Before making the cut, place the point of the blade on the line at a point close to the beginning of the cut. Then move the cutter head (without cutting) to a point near the

end of the proposed cut. By doing this you will be able to tell if your cut will be exactly on the line you have drawn.

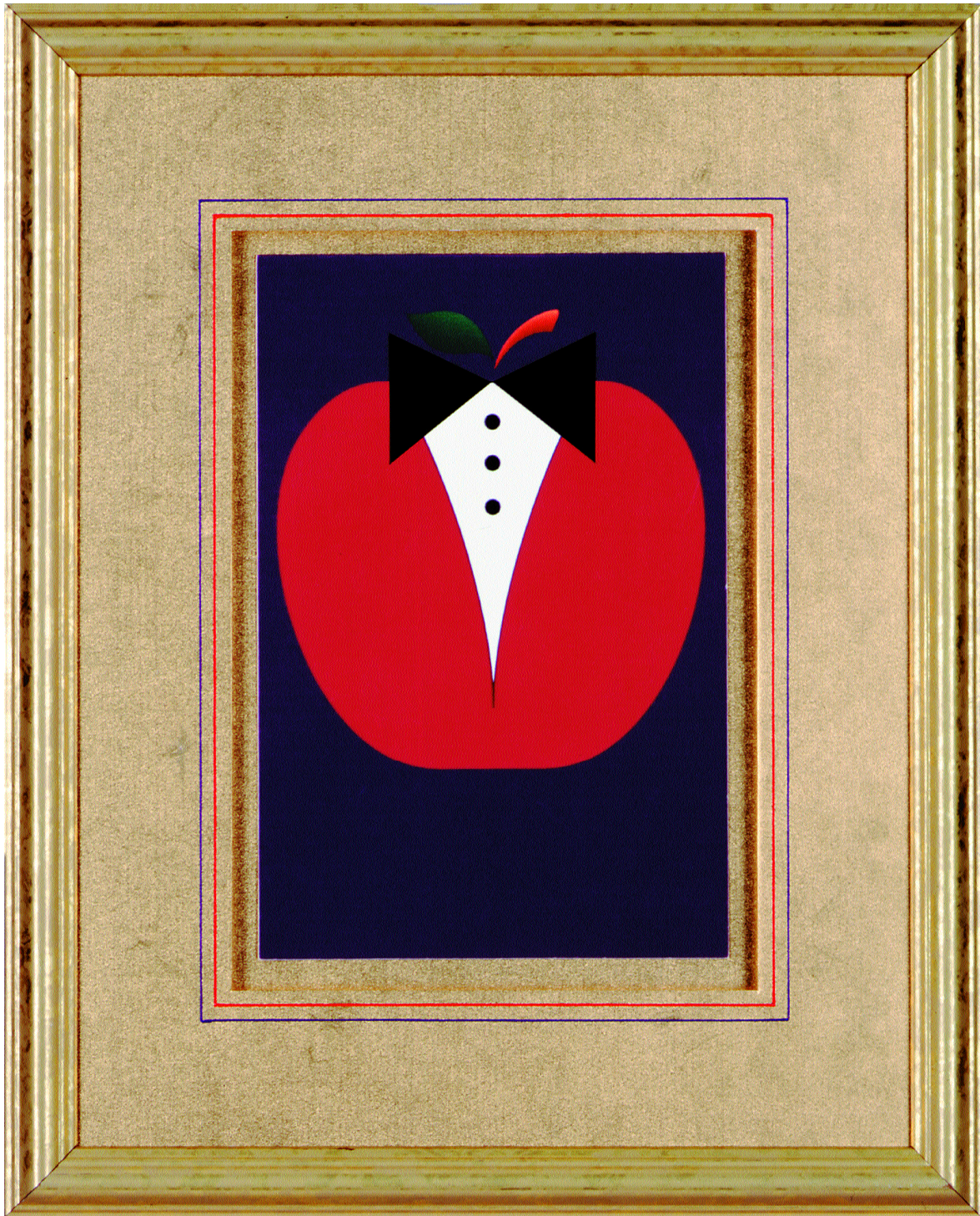
Place the point of the blade directly on the pencil line to get the proper desired dimension. If you mark the mat on the back, the cut edge will be about $\frac{1}{16}$ " narrower than the desired dimension.

To cut a multiple layered mat, proceed as you would to cut any double mat, making certain that the pencil lines drawn on the second mat are measured from the edge of the first mat cut. You must also gently peel apart the fall-out of the second mat from that of the first mat. Then peel apart the window mats along one side to pull out the fall-out of the first mat. The two mats can then be realigned to the proper

position.

The second method is to cut the mat with the color side face up, placed against the mat guide as if to cut a standard bevel. When using this method, it is best to use measuring stops. (If your mat cutter has them; this method could prove difficult on a cutter without stops.) You can also draw light pencil lines on the face of the mat where the corner of the cut will be and erase them later.

Single or Multiple Layered Mats



Mat Design courtesy of Tru Vue Inc. Framing Design by Tim Franer, CPF, Matboard: Sun Ultimat #1991

The Reverse Bevel

The following step-by-step instructions are an easy way to learn the second method. You may wish to follow these instructions at your own mat cutter with your own materials. The key is to remember that the fillet mat will be cut first and top mat will be cut second. It is just the reverse of cutting a regular double mat. For this example I will use a light colored mat as the top mat and a dark colored mat for the fillet mat.

Step One

Cut the dark (fillet) mat to an outside dimension of 16" x 20". Cut the light (top) mat to a slightly smaller size of 15 $\frac{5}{8}$ " x 19 $\frac{5}{8}$ ". Draw a line on the back of each mat across one side so that they can always be oriented in the same way.

Step Two

Prepare to cut the fillet mat first by setting the mat guide and stops. Cut the margins of the mat at 3", the total margin including the fillet mat. First set the mat guide at 3". Set the top stop, at $\frac{3}{16}$ ". Set the bottom stop, at 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ ". The setting on the measuring stops will compensate for the usual overcut when cutting a mat in the normal way.

Step Three

Cut the bottom mat, face up, using these settings. The blade will enter the top surface of the mat without

the aid of a line to determine where the cut should begin or end. You must rely on the stops.

Step Four

After cutting all four sides, the corners will be undercut. By hand finish the cuts with a mat blade. Make this cut from the top side so you can control where the blade is cutting.

The key is to remember that the fillet mat will be cut first and top mat will be cut second.

Step Five

Place the bottom mat face up on the table. Place the fall-out within the window, and place some short strips of double sided tape on the face of the fall-out and the mat corners. Then place the stop mat on the top surface of the bottom mat. Note that the bottom must protrude beyond the edges of the top mat on all four sides.

Step Six

Now set the mat guide and stops to cut the top mat, color face up, while it is taped to the bottom mat. It is the edges of the bottom mat which will be set against the mat guide. To provide a $\frac{1}{4}$ " fillet, set the mat guide at 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ ", the top stop at 2 $\frac{15}{16}$ ", and the bottom stop at 2 $\frac{7}{8}$ ". Then cut the mat.

Step Seven

Gently peel the mat apart. After cutting the mat on all four sides, finish the cuts as in step 4. With the mats fully cut, re-tape and re-align the mats. The mat is now ready to put in the frame.

As I stated previously, reverse bevels are a design tool that can solve many of the problems framers face with pastels and can eliminate the distraction that a mix of color cores can create. Reverse bevels allow you to use a color core as an accent without combining it with a clashing white core. Using a reverse bevel gives you the benefit of working with three colors without creating a triple mat with mixed color bevels.

Remember, it takes time to develop the skill needed to cut reverse bevels well. Grab some mat board and enjoy developing this skill! ■

These instructions, by Dan Bowen, CPF, originally appeared in our January 1994 issue.