



The Savvy Framer

Vol 1, Issue 2

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Project of the Month

How to Mat and Frame a Canvas Board

November-December 2007

Framing a canvas board can present some of the same challenges as framing a book or a record album. The problem is the thickness of the item. The solution is to trap it in a "sink".

A canvas board is a high quality cotton canvas wrapped around a heavy multi-ply board.



You need to build up the area around the board, so the board can rest in a "sink".

It allows painters to get started painting quickly without having to go through the preliminaries

of having to stretch the canvas over a wooden frame, and it's cheaper than pre-stretched canvas. But framing a canvas board can present something of a challenge.

Unlike stretched canvas, which is typically placed in a frame without matting or glazing, canvas board is often framed in the same manner as art on paper.

That's because when the canvas is adhered to the board it's less prone to rot than stretched canvas



Step 1: Begin by measuring the canvas board. Then subtract a half inch from each dimension.

which must have air circulation through the fibers. Placing glass over stretched canvas retards air circulation, and because stretched canvas is not glazed, there is no functional reason to mat

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Questions Answered in this Issue:

- What's the difference between the symbols ™ and ®?
- Is it safe to dry mount rice paper and sheepskin?
- Are high volume production frame jobs of the same quality as custom frame jobs?
- What role does risk play in determining material costs?

Inside this issue:

How to compete with the big boys. 4

The differences between different types of dry mount adhesives. 7

Business Sense

Should You Trademark Your Business Name?

Officially registering your name with the US Patent and Trademark Office can save you some unpleasant surprises down the road, but even without the official ® you are not without some protection.

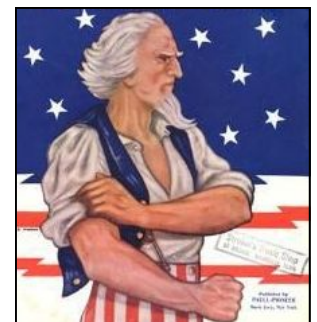
Starting out in any new business, you are presented with a lot of bases to cover, all of which seem important, even crucial, lest you step out of line with the authorities or leave your-

self open to exploitation. One of these is the question of whether or not you should trademark your business name.

The fear, of course, is that if you don't trademark your name some-

body could swoop in later, after you've sunk a lot of money and time into establishing it, and steal it from you, thereby profiting from your hard work. This fear has been

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Should you call on Uncle Sam to defend your good name?



Border Finder	
Frame Size in United Inches	Suggested Borders
8" to 11"	1"
12" to 17"	1½"
18" to 24"	1¾"
25" to 36"	2"
36" to 44"	2½"
44" to 56"	3"

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it since the mat acts as a separator between the glass and the artwork. But canvas boards are another matter.

Without the concern about air circulation, canvas boards can be matted and glazed, and frequently are. The trick is providing a stable area around the canvas board to make it flush with the surface of the canvas so that when the mat and glass are placed over it everything in the stack (glass-mat-artwork-backing) is level and firm. Canvas boards are nearly 1/8-inch thick. Unless the surrounding area can be raised 1/8-inch, the mat will sag around the artwork like drooping hat brim.

The solution for this dilemma is a trapping technique called the "sink-mount". It's referred to as a trapping technique because the artwork is trapped in place rather than glued or taped. Trapping techniques are particularly good for the preservation of artwork.

To begin, measure the size of the artwork. The artwork in our

example was 7"x11". And then subtract 1/2-inch from both the height and the width to determine the window size. In our case, the window size was 6½" x 10½".

Next, use the Border Finder to find a good starting border. The Border Finder works on the concept of united inches. Add together the height and the width of the window to get the united inches. In our case, 6½" + 10½" = 17 united inches. The Border Finder told us that borders of 1½" surrounding the window would be a good place to start, but we recognized that it's currently fashionable to have wider borders, and that if we went with borders of

12"x16".

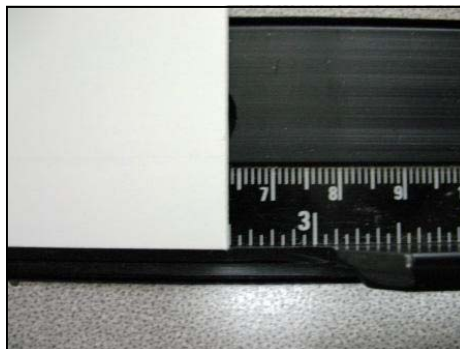
Normally, we would be finished with measuring at this point, but we are constructing a sink mount, so there's a little more. We need to determine the dimensions of the strips that will constitute the sink on the surface of the backing board. What we're going to do is



Step 4: Cut strips of foamboard in the correct sizes.

cut four strips foamboard and assemble them on the surface of the backing board (which is also made of foamboard) to create a recess or "sink" into which the canvas board will fit like a puzzle piece. Because the canvas board is about 1/8-inch thick, we'll use 1/8-inch thick foamboard strips to create the sink. But what are the dimensions of these strips?

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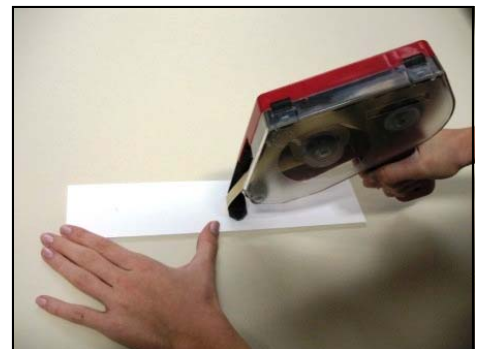
Step 3: Subtract the width of the canvas board from the width of the backing board and divide the difference in half.

2¾" on each side we would end up with an overall size of 12"x16", which is a standard frame size. So we went with 2¾" borders.

$$2\frac{3}{4}'' + 6\frac{1}{2}'' + 2\frac{3}{4}'' = 12''$$

$$2\frac{3}{4}'' + 10\frac{1}{2}'' + 2\frac{3}{4}'' = 16''$$

Here's what we had determined so far. Mat size: 12"x16". Window size: 6½" + 10½". Borders: 2¾". Glass size: 12"x16". Backing size: 12"x16". Frame size:



Step 5: Apply double sided adhesive tape to each strip.





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drop-dead clever name as you, something like Frame of Mind, or Frame by Frame, or I've Been Framed? And what if his workmanship isn't up to snuff and you're worried he may be trampling on your good reputation? Yes, this can happen. But before you move trademarking back up the list, ask yourself whether your business is primarily local, and if it is, whether this character is likely to be reaching the same customers as you. If not, don't worry about the fact that he has the same name, unless you plan on expanding your business into his territory at some point. If you do, however, something interesting could happen. He could sue you for trademark infringement, even if

he's never bothered to have his name officially registered.

The first person to use a name in trade gets the senior right to continue using that name, whether or not it's officially registered. Obviously,

"When little Amazon Bookstore in Michigan tried to expand beyond the its locality, a great big bad national entity, who had actually arrived on the scene after them, said nay-nay, and they had to eat it."

ously, this can't extend to all 50 states. Otherwise, a guy named Al in Kihei, Hawaii would be barred from using the name Al's Picture Framing just because a guy in Walworth, Maine already has it, even though Al from Maine has

never been to Hawaii and never served a Hawaiian customer. But it will protect Al in Walworth, Maine from any other upstart Al who wants to start a frame shop in Walworth under that name.

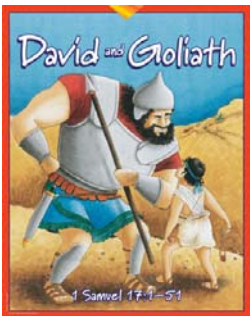
To put it more succinctly, as long as your business remains local, you can claim a right to the name for that locality simply by using it. You can adopt a mark to convey this as well. "TM" used by your name means you claim that name as a trademark, regardless of whether you filed an application with the USPTO (the US Patent and Trademark Office). On the other hand, you may not use the mark ® unless you've registered with the USPTO. A word of caution here. You are not consid-

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How to Compete with the Big Boys For Volume Framing

Volume framing means big money and lots of business but to land that contract you've got to go toe-to-toe with the big boys who already have a leg up on you with outsourced labor and huge economies of scale. How do you compete?

A former student from one of my workshops was looking to produce a line of 14"x18" framed and matted prints to be sold in high volume to grade



schools at low prices. She wanted a black frame, a window mat and acrylic glazing. A competitive product was already in the marketplace,

selling for a mere \$25. At that price, the cost in labor and materials could not have exceeded \$15.

Normally, this would cost \$26.39 for the materials alone. Somehow, her competitor had dramatically gutted his costs.

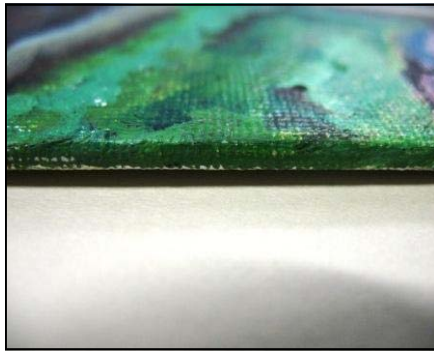
Given the size of the piece, I had to assume there were some good sized economies of scale at work with the competitor. In all likelihood, this was a mass produced piece, leveraging volume in the tens of thousands, and jobbed out to Southeast Asia to reduce labor costs. My student was trying to go toe to toe with the big boys. She would have a challenge in front of her.

My former student could foresee initial volume to the tune of

750 a month, which in a year's time could amount to 9,000 units, but she certainly was in no position to guarantee that, and so she could not bring much volume to bear in leveraging lower costs, as her competitor was doing. So how could she lower her costs enough to meet her competitor's price and become a David to his chest-pounding Goliath?

First, I asked her to consider who her customers were. Were they going to be the sort of people who expected top quality archival framing for valuable artwork intended to last generations. Of

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Step 8: Herein lies the problem, the canvas board is nearly 1/8" thick.

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Assemble the top and bottom strips to the backing board. And then assemble the side strips.

Place the artwork in the sink. Because the foamboard is 1/8-inch thick, the surface of the canvas board is flush with the surface of



Step 9: Herein lies the solution, place the canvas board in the 1/8" thick recess created by assembling the strips of foamboard.

the foamboard strips in which it nests. If this is not the case, you can insert a piece of matboard beneath the canvas board in the sink to elevate it slightly.

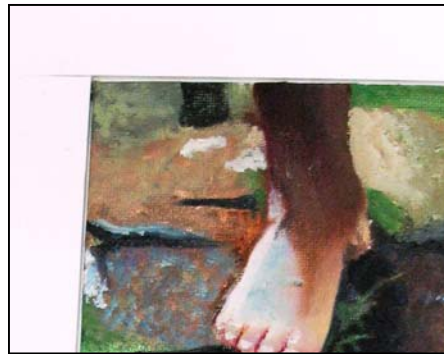
Cut a window mat and place it over the artwork. The edges of the mat's window will encroach 1/4-inch onto the surface of the canvas board, trapping it front-to-back in

the sink. You can adhere the mat to the surface of the sink with double-sided tape, if you like.

Cut your glazing and place it over the mat.

You are ready to place the entire stack into a frame.

A sink-mount is a great way to mount and mat any artwork that is



Step 10: The surrounding area is now flush with the surface of the canvas board. The canvas board is trapped in the sink top-to-bottom and right-to-left.

thick, particularly any artwork that you want to preserve since it involves putting no adhesive on the artwork.



Step 11: When you place the mat over the artwork, the overlap of the window's edge onto the face of the artwork traps the canvas board front-to-back.



Step 12: Place your glazing over the mat and the stack of components is ready to be loaded into a frame.

How to Compete with the Big Boys

(Continued from page 4)

course not. They were elementary school teachers who were going to hang these inexpensive framed pieces in their classrooms in much the same way they had hang laminated posters.

This is an important point to make. Far too many professional framers eyeing a diverse range of framing ventures think only in terms of traditional custom framing with its emphasis on high end materials and archival longevity. There are purists in this camp who have a knee-jerk reaction to anything that's not custom, archival and constituted of name brand components with a trendy cachet. Nonsense. The quickest way for my student to kiss this opportunity goodbye was to adhere to that line. Her customers weren't expecting a custom, archival frame job. What they were expecting was a pleasant framed piece at a low, low price. And to give them that she was going to have to cut corners – just like her competitors were doing.

Most high volume frame jobs,

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ered to be using the name unless you have used it in a direct communication to customers, such as a sign, advertisement, etc. It's not enough to just go around saying, "My name is Al's Frame Shop".

So why bother with all the rigmarole of officially registering with the USPTO? Well, we've already seen one good reason. If you plan to expand your business beyond your local area, you'll need to be ready for all comers. Can you imagine the chagrin of little Amazon Bookstore in Michigan when it tried to expand beyond the confines of its locality? A great big bad national entity, who had actually arrived on the scene after them, said nay-nay, and they had to eat it.

Another good reason is on the off-chance that somebody else has already registered your name. This might be called the "ignorance-is-bliss" factor. One

story tells of a lady who went to register her domain name and found the URL unavailable. Alerted to the necessity of trademarking to avoid any other such encumbrances, she went to have her name trademarked and discovered, to her horror, that it had already been trademarked nine years earlier, which meant she had no legal right to use it. With six years of reputation and goodwill behind her, she had no intention of changing her name and so she sought to resolve any future problems by attempting to buy the name from the owner (who was not using it). He hit her up for \$10,000 and she forked over the money. One has to wonder (a.) what would've happened if she hadn't alerted the owner to the infringement; and (b.) what would've happened if she hadn't even bothered with the search. Likely nothing – as had been the case for the past six years. But the fact was that the woman

was planning on expanding and she saw this as a major impediment, so she took it on.

The lesson to take from this is that if you are planning on growing your business beyond the merely local, you may want to get trademarking squared away early in the process. But you certainly don't need to do it straight out of the box. Early on in your business you'll have plenty of concerns from taxation to licensing. Registering your trademark with USPTO need not have the same urgency.

Build your business first, establish a reputation and consider whether or not you may someday wish to expand, and then put it in your tickler file to consider again at some future date, and then get down to the things that matter most.



How to Compete with the Big Boys

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the kind of things you see in gift shops and big box retail stores, are not of the same quality as those produced in storefront frame shops. To a layman's eye, the workmanship may be similar – the corner joints are tight, the mat's don't show much in the way of overcuts – but the materials are often quite different. Volume framers use matboard that, while acid-neutralized and unlikely to pose a threat to the artwork for more than 50 years,

often have face papers that are neither as sturdy nor as fade-resistant as those on the more popular brands.

But the most significant difference between low priced matboard and the more popular brands is just that - the brand. We've all seen it. A no-name store brand sits on your grocer's shelf next to the most popular brand. It costs 30% less with no discernable difference in quality, yet people still buy the more popular brand. Why? Because they know the brand name

and trust it, and that's as it should be. But in a situation where your first priority is a low, low price, it's a luxury you'll have to dispense with if you want to compete with those enjoying enormous economies of scale.

Framing4Yourself occasionally offers sales on this low priced, no-name matboard, and we can source it whenever a customer is looking at high volume and needs a down and dirty price. Using this matboard rather than, say,

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How to Compete ...

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Crescent's regular matboard, can save 40% a sheet and knock the cost for a 14"x18" from \$1.25, down to .87, which is precisely what we proposed to do for my former student.

The next challenge was the frame. Normally a 1" wide black wood frame of the kind she wanted pre-mitered to 14"x18" and ready to join without tools would cost \$20.30. Because she was buying 100 feet of moulding at a time, she was able to take advantage of our volume pricing and get the 14"x18" wood moulding down to \$13.00, but she would still have the labor of joining it. I suggested polystyrene moulding as an alternative. Hanging on the wall, it looks exactly like wood but is plastic injected and available at a much lower cost. By buying 100 ft at a time, she would be able get the 14"x18" polystyrene frame down to \$10.15, half of what the same thing would cost in a wood frame.

Finally, there was the acrylic. Buying just one piece of 12"x16" would cost \$4.99. Picture framing grade acrylic is approximately 1/8" thick, but savings can be enjoyed by going with 1/16" thick acrylic instead. And buying in volume of 200 pieces at a time, the cost can be reduced to \$2.79 per piece. This is what we suggested.

So the material costs looked like this: Frame \$10.15 + Mat .87 + acrylic glazing \$2.79. Total = \$13.81. But then there was the

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Options in Dry Mounting Tissues and

When you dry mount, you are confronted with a choice of different films and tissues. Which film is best for you? Let's examine the different types of dry mounting films and tissues to see which works best in a given situation.

Dry mounting works by melting a film or tissue that is infused with deactivated adhesive and then adhering it in a uniform coat between the artwork and mounting board by means of pressure. There are a several different types of dry mounting tissues and films, each designed for optimal use with certain types of artwork.

Most popular is ColorMount®, a thin layer of tissue coated with inert adhesive that melts and then bonds when heated. ColorMount was originally developed for resin coated (RC) photographs but has now become widely used for posters and lithographs as well. It bonds any smooth-surfaced paper to a board when the press reaches a temperature of 175-200°. Once mounted the bond is unaffected by extremes of temperature or humidity and requires a solvent for removal. ColorMount is not recommended for very thin papers, such as rice paper, tissue or silk, as it may bleed through.

BufferMount® is an acid-neutralized, acid-free tissue and is used in those projects that seek an "acid-free" pedigree. It is coated with a low-temperature adhesive that melts during heating and bonds as it cools. Specially designed for use with reproductions, photographs and thin delicate materials, it will not bleed through rice paper, sheepskin, tissue or

silk.

Fusion®4000 is a film, not a tissue, which means that it is a solid layer of adhesive that melts



Dry mount tissues and films come in 5 different types, each with distinct advantages.

during the heating process. Because it has no paper core, it can be pieced onto oversize pieces without showing a seam at the point of overlap. It is especially effective with fabrics and heavily textured prints but is also widely used for fiber based photographs, photostats, art papers, and newsprint.

ClearMount® is the first choice for giclee and fine art prints, and is the ideal film for dry mounting professionally produced digital prints and photographs on fine art papers.

Finally, RagMount® is designed for digital fine art prints and has a 100% cotton rag tissue carrier. Superior for archival dry mounting.



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Phone 1-800-246-4726 for more details



How to Compete with the Big Boys

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labor.

Assembling mouldings is typically a two step process requiring first gluing and then V-nailing, but with polystyrene mouldings the glue has to be allowed to set before the nails are driven, making it a long labor time and one involving lots of strap clamps, not ideal for a production environment. The labor costs would skyrocket.

So we went back to the wood moulding and I suggested she order her chops T-nail routed for fast assembly, gutting the labor. As it takes less than one minute to assemble a frame this way, at a labor rate of \$14/hr it would cost .23 in labor to make the frame, and a comparable amount to cut the mat and load the frame. Say about .50

total in labor. The T-nail routs and pegs would add another .30 to the cost.

Now the costs looked like this. Frame \$13.00 + Mat .87 + acrylic glazing \$2.79 + .30 T-nails + .50 for labor. Total for material and labor = \$17.46.

We had missed the mark, but not by much. But if my student could commit contractually to buying enough moulding for just one month worth of production at 750 frames a month, she would be committing to 4,500 feet of moulding, and could certainly trim her frame costs further, perhaps as much as the needed \$2.46.

It turns out we were looking at some dramatic economies of scale after all, but taking advantage of them was not without some risk.

My student would have to be willing to commit at least \$8,000 contractually for the frames. In this area, she was certainly meeting her Goliath on level ground. No one goes into a business like this without taking a risk, and it's when the risk pays off that others scratch their heads and wonder how they accomplished it.

The alternative is to hedge your risk and accept that without adequate volume you will not enjoy the same economies of scale. But you will be able to test the waters without getting in too deeply and likely survive to strategize for the moment when you are willing to accept more risk and fatten your margins. My student was still mulling it over when last we spoke. ▼