

Mastering Mounting



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More Than a Canvas

During the early 1980s the concept of transferring an RC photograph to canvas was reserved for the photo industry. By 1991 a canvas product called CanvasMount was released into the framing market by Seal Products. It was an adhesive-coated, heat-activated canvas with a release liner that allowed mounting of already laminated and stripped photos or prints to take on the appearance of having been created on canvas (Photo 1). All the usual suspects came out with their own versions, and the in-house production of canvas transferring was totally embraced. Canvases for transferring were available from all the regular dry mount companies and ran from white to dark natural and coarse cotton duck to fine linen (Photo 2). Some had release liners that protected the light tack adhesive for placement that holds the transfer until mounted (Photo 3), while others only had adhesive coating.

Fast forward 15 years to the onset of digital printing. Many of the earlier products are still available, but there's very little call for canvas transfers--though an occasional request may have you digging out old dusty rolls of HA (heat activated) canvas. If only there were a practical application that could make it useful in today's market, like a museum presentation.

New Gallery

After years of planning, our local museum celebrated a grand reopening with a ribbon cutting of the Mark and Jessie Milano Gallery for the history of the Tehachapi Kawaiisu Indians. The new gallery features floor to ceiling showcases; low temperature LED



Photo 1: Photos in traditional transfers are surface laminated, peeled, and then aligned and mounted to a heat-activated canvas.

exhibition lighting; non-shatter acrylic glazing; and a multi camera, round-the-clock security system that brought this small town museum into the twenty-first century. The inaugural exhibition was to feature handmade baskets and photos of local families and regional rock art pictographs and petroglyphs.

All photos were digital reproductions, so they could be trimmed and mounted without concern. And since they were to be in showcases, they did not require surface lamination. Black 3/16" foamboard was selected as the substrate both for its color and for the ability to reverse bevel cut the edges for display. The most efficient way to mount multiples is to use full 32"x40" boards, cut a single sheet of permanent tissue adhesive, and puzzle them together for the best use of space (Photo 4). All were individually tacked so as to not slip, and they were all mounted at one time in a large 40"x60" hot vacuum press. Once mounted they were cut into strips using a manual Fletcher-



Photo 2: Assorted commercial canvas textures and colors allow for a greater product variation.

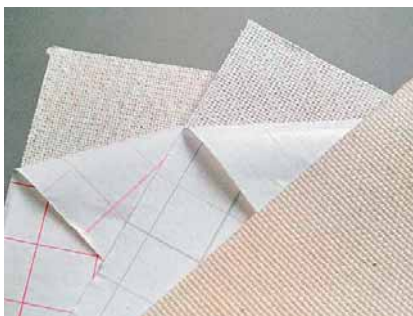


Photo 3: Liners protect tacky placement adhesive that holds the decal transfers prior to mounting.



Photo 4: A black 3/16" foamboard is covered with ColorMount tissue, and photos are fit for maximum use.



Photo 5: Once mounted, the photos are cut into strips and reverse trimmed on a manual mat cutter.



Photo 6: Mounted images for the rock art display were hot glued to sturdy wrapped Gatorboard panels, which lean against the lashed wood drying rack in the staged display.



Photo 8: For the preliminary alignment, the back flaps of the canvas were attached with ATG from the center to the outside corners like canvas on a stretcher.

Terry 2100 then sized by reverse bevel cutting them apart (Photo 5). Once mounted and reverse trimmed, they were brought to the museum for final assembly and installation.

Display Preparation

Though there are many possible solutions for the display, the project was in crunch mode--two days prior to the opening--and there was a very limited budget. Gatorboard--a.k.a. Gatorfoam--seemed like the best substrate choice, since it was both rigid and lightweight. The covering needed to be a rustic, rough textured natural looking fabric like coarse-weave canvas. An old roll of CanvasMount was perfect as the quick and simple wrap over Gatorboard. Boards were sized from 8"x18" to 18"x24" for the storytelling photo collages and 10"x40" tall panels to create the height needed to rest against the wood drying

frame for the scientific photos of the rock art (Photo 6).

The fabric was cut with a 1-1/2" allowance around the panel. Since the light tack adhesive for image placement to the canvas had diminished over time, a strip of ATG held the turned flaps until heat-set by mounting (Photo 7). When wrapping, the fabric back had to be pressed to the ATG, working from the center to the corners just as though stretching a canvas to bars (Photo 8). This assured that the fabric was cleanly wrapped with no gaps or twisting. The canvas was diagonally trimmed at the corners to reduce the bulk of the wrap since the panels were to be floated off the wall and not hidden within a frame (Photo 9). All edges had to be cleanly wrapped and smoothed prior to final mounting in the press (Photo 10).

After preparation, the panels were mounted at 190°F in two bites

at 10 minutes each (Photo 11).

Using a mechanical press gave immediate pressure when the heat was applied, which assured that the fabric did not shift once the ATG had warmed in the press prior to the vacuum being drawn. The extended mounting time was only added to insure the full activation of the 15-year-old adhesive to the veneer-sided Gatorboards. Since no art was involved in this stage of mounting, the added time wouldn't hurt anything. The completed canvas panels were strong, visually rustic, solidly covered by the coarse canvas, and an affordable solution to the display problem.

Installation

As the framing consultant in charge of mounting, placement design, and installation of all the photos, I found a few challenges surrounding this project. The original plan was to affix the mounted family photos



Photo 9: Trimming the canvas corners helps reduce bulk at the corners of the panels.

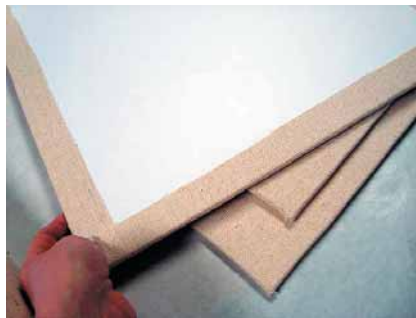


Photo 10: All the fabric should be cleanly aligned and tacked with ATG prior to final bonding in a press.



Photo 11: The panels were mounted in bites using a mechanical press for immediate heat and pressure.



Photo 12: Family photos in the showcase display were grouped and hot glued to the wrapped Gatorboard, then mounted to the wall on 1" foamboard lifters.

at various levels onto the back wall of the showcases with 1" strip lifters behind, allowing them to float off the wall. However, the LED system had limited points of low-level lighting in the front of the showcase, which made the back wall darker than desired for display. Plus, there were a great many more images than originally planned, which meant they had to be clustered and/or overlapped to help better tell the story of the families through the images without a text story board.

The functional 3-D format created by using the CanvasMount covered boards proved to be the perfect solution. The 3/16" mounted photos were hot glued to the wrapped Gator panels using a Polygun-TC and #3797-TC Jet-Melt glue sticks. And because of the rigidity of the panels, the photos could be extended off the edges, stacked, and lifted as needed for a

full collage effect (Photo 12). This also allowed placing the photos at various depths in the showcase to capitalize on the front lighting.

Strips of 1" wide 1/2" foamboard strips were screwed to the walls behind the mounted panels to lift them from the surface. In some cases there were crisscross layers of two or three strips for additional lift. Then high tack indoor-outdoor sponge tape was applied to the lifter strips and the collage panels were attached to them. This allowed for later removal and storage of the collage panels without damage to the photos.

Other Uses for HA Canvas

Since framers never throw anything away, there always seems to be old moulding, dusty matboards, and rolls of unused materials around. These old supplies always seem to get used one day, but the problem is not thinking of them when a solution is needed. The odds of having a lot of demand for in-house canvas transfers in these days of digital canvas printing is far less than the opportunity to use it as a backing inside a shadowbox or as a covered substrate for signage.

Another perfect use of unused canvas and fabric is a bulletin board. In that case, the HA fabric is mounted to a 3/16" or 1/2" foamboard and framed with decorative discontinued moulding. It's a great way to use up

older inventory. End cuts of fabric make wonderful tall, thin (6"x20") boards for narrow wall spaces between doorways in kitchens or alongside a door to a garage. Consider kitchen display panels for recipes hanging above the backsplash or next to the stove. CanvasMount is neutral in color and adapts to many interiors with the right frame.

There are a great many uses for older products, and there is no reason not to capitalize on them to help bring in a few profits. Charging \$1.50 to \$2.50 a united inch--depending on your selected substrate and canvas--is a pretty easy sell and will help use up more outdated products. This industry may be state of the art and embraces new products, but sometimes the old standbys help pay the rent.

Happy holidays and a profitable 2011 for all! ■

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