

Mastering Mounting



by
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Retexturing Laminate Surfaces

Resurfacing and retexturing laminates is a simple way to create new surface finishes with your existing PVC vinyl laminates. The small 8"x10" featured print from Donald Art Company was mounted, laminated then placed back into the press a third time to change the laminate surface by creating the wrinkled appearance (Photo 1).

Product Compatibility

Commercial laminates are available in a number of assorted smooth finishes including: ultra matte, satin matte, semi-matte, matte, luster, semi-gloss, and gloss. Vinyl textures include: sand, emery, linen, and canvas as assorted patterns embedded into slightly thicker films. Vinyl laminates have been available in framing and photo markets since the early 1980s, and were originally developed as a glass substitute. All manufacturer brands are compatible and may be used together.

Overlay foam, sponge overlay, plastic foam, and foam overlay blanket are all names associated with the sponge sheet that

must be laid over the film for proper laminating. Make certain that all your purchased products are totally compatible prior to laminating any project. There are sponge foams available by the yard at craft and fabric stores but these may stick to laminate surfaces. All laminating films and foams within the industry have always been compatible with their only difference being the heat required to activate the film adhesives.

Hot Press overlay foil, a.k.a. Drytac Glazing Foil, has been sold for years as the thin acrylic film product designed to give a smooth finish to any smooth surface mounted laminate. Mixing and matching manufacturers' products may very well give you the desired result you wish, but always test the combinations and verify all times and temperatures prior to using them on a customer projects.

Proper Applications

One must always learn the rules before being allowed to bend them. Refinishing and retexturing is bending the procedure to produce a new end product...a finish that didn't exist before. The proper procedure for laminating any print or photo is to first mount it with a permanent tissue adhesive, then apply the laminate as a permanent protective coating. A permanent adhesive is required when laminating so it does not release during repeated reheating.

The large print in Photo 1 is a 27"x32"



Photo 1: This 8"x10" open edition still life floral was mounted with Drytac Trimount tissue onto 4-ply Artcare mount board. The wrinkled appearance was achieved from the same gloss laminate.



Photo 2: All vinyl laminating films have a layer of lightly tacky heat activated adhesive applied to the back side with a single release liner. Save the liner when removed for retexturing of the surface.

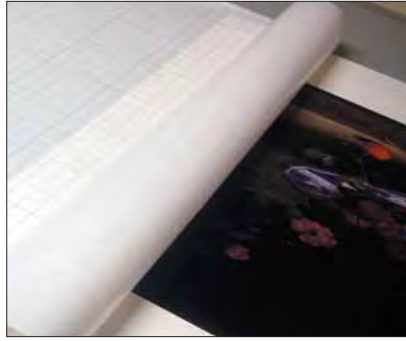


Photo 3: Peel back the laminate liner 6" and tack lightly to the end of the mounted print. Flip the laminate/liner 180 degrees away from the print, which exposes the free end of the liner for removal.

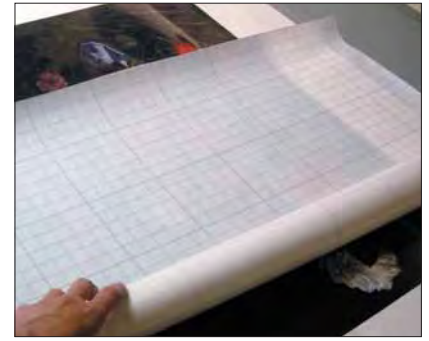


Photo 4: The release liner may now easily be pulled and rolled while it is peeled from the sticky laminate leaving the laminate positioned onto the print.



Photo 5: Lift the film from each end, and roll back down onto the print to generally smooth out air.

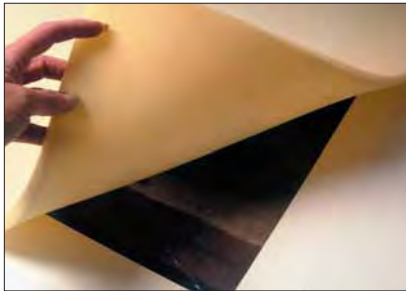


Photo 6: Overlay foam is required to be placed over the film to achieve proper lamination.



Photo 7: When overlay foam has been forgotten from the laminating package trapped air pockets will result.

floral still life open edition print from New York Graphic Society that has been mounted and laminated in a 40"x60" hot vacuum press. A full sized 32"x40" clay coat heat activated foamboard $\frac{3}{16}$ " thick was chosen for this. All vinyl laminating films have a layer of lightly tacky heat activated adhesive applied to the back side with a single release liner (Photo 2). The 2-3 mil thick vinyl is easy to align on small pieces, but when working with oversized or full sheet sizes a very systematic approach should be used.

The laminate requires alignment over the mounted print without exposure to the open air because the tacky adhesive will attract dust particles. Peel back the liner from the film on one end exposing about 6" of the tacky backing and align over the image.

Flip the laminate/liner 180 degrees away from the print face, which exposes the free end of the liner for removal (Photo 3). The release liner may now easily be pulled and rolled while being peeled from the sticky laminate leaving the laminate positioned on the print (Photo 4).

The film is repositionable when first applied and may be lifted from the print for realignment or to remove small amounts of trapped air (Photo 5). Lift the film from each end, and allow it to roll back down onto the print to generally smooth out air. This may be done from all four corners or all four sides as you see fit.

Do not pull the film from the corners to smooth, but gently lift and roll down. It should also not be aggressively burnished, just run fingertips lightly across the aligned, unmounted laminate to indicate if

all trapped air has been adequately removed prior to mounting. If air pockets move freely the image will mount fine. If fingers roll over mounds of laminate, most likely it will crease when mounting.

Sponge Foam

Overlay foam is required to be placed over the film to achieve proper laminating (Photo 6). There are three basic reasons for the foam: it slows the bonding time allowing for air to be compressed from between the laminate and mounted artwork; the open cell structure of the foam helps transport the air to the edges and away from the art; and, it gives even pressure during bonding against all highs and lows of textured 5 mil laminates.

Foams are available as $\frac{1}{4}$ " and $\frac{1}{2}$ " thick, in an assortment of colors



Photo 8: When correctly mounted, the soft vinyl laminate will pick up the open cell texture of the overlay foam during the mounting process.



Photo 9: The left upper half of the photo shows a print with ultra matte laminate that does not exhibit sponge texture, while the lower right half glass does showcase the texture.



Photo 10: The act of removing the embedded sponge texture from a laminate surface is called resurfacing. The upper half of this print shows the typical sponge texture while the lower half has had the texture removed by remounting with the laminate liner laid over the surface.

from white, blue, brown to gray. Thickness and color don't matter, but the bulk of the 1/2" foams seem to help them maintain their shape without compressing under normal mounting pressures. When the foam has been forgotten or deleted from the laminating package trapped air pockets will result (Photo 7).

When correctly mounted, the softened vinyl laminate will pick up the open cell texture of the overlay foam during the mounting process (Photo 8). The visibility of the sponge texture is greater with glossier laminates than matte or ultra matte ones. This is the result of light reflecting off the uneven

surface, which better showcases the texture (Photo 9).

Glossing and Smoothing: Resurfacing

There are two ways a smoother laminate surface may be achieved: either by using a sheet of commercial acrylic Glazing Foil, or by

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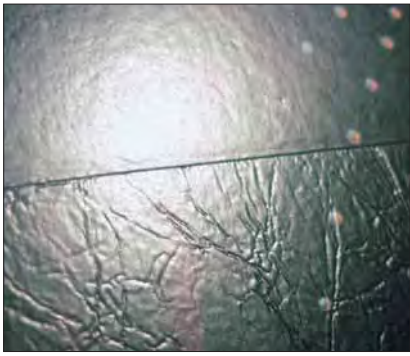


Photo 11: The upper half of the photo shows a resurfaced laminate while the bottom half is a sample of retexturing into a wrinkled surface texture.



Photo 12: Wad the liner aggressively, being careful not to tear holes in it. More wrinkles, more texture. Wrinkles more in one area than another, even better.



Photo 13: Place the wrinkled liner over the mounted/laminated print, without sponge foam and run through a full press cycle.

using the laminate liner itself. The sponge texture embedded into the vinyl film may be significantly lessened or eliminated by placing the laminated image back into the press another full five minutes with the smooth release liner against the face of the laminate. This act of removing the embedded sponge texture from a laminate surface is called

resurfacing (Photo 10). The upper half of this print shows the typical sponge texture while the lower half has had the texture removed by remounting with the laminate liner laid over the surface.

Wrinkling and Texturing: Retexturing

Wrinkling is another interesting

and creative texture made by placing a previously laminated print, back into the press with a wrinkled release liner instead of a smooth one. This application of creating a creased, crinkled, almost leather-like appearance is known as retexturing (Photo 11). It only works well with smooth surfaced laminates such as matte or luster, since



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textured laminates fight the new texture appearance.

Just as with the above resurfacing process, the release liner is the texture tool. Wad up the liner aggressively being careful not to tear holes in it (Photo 12). More wrinkles, more texture, and more wrinkles in one area than another, looks even better. After wrinkling, place the liner on top of the previously mounted and laminated print. Try the process with and without the sponge to test for product compatibility and to determine the desired embedded texture (Photo 13).

Preperforated Films

Porosity is a huge issue when laminating. A nonporous laminate over a porous paper print is fine, but nonporous laminate film over nonporous photo will trap air bubbles. Perforating vinyl laminates is the solution to mounting over a nonporous item, by making the laminate temporarily porous through the temporary holes. This allows any air to be compressed from beneath the film during bonding.

Many laminates may be purchased preperforated, a real time saver for laminating, but a total stopper for creative applications using the release liner. The tiny holes in preperforated films melt together during the heat mounting process making them all disappear from the laminate coating, but unfortunately those same holes are also in the liner. Unfortunately, those holes will transfer their 1/4" perforation pattern during the resurfacing or retexturing process to the mother laminate (Photo 14).

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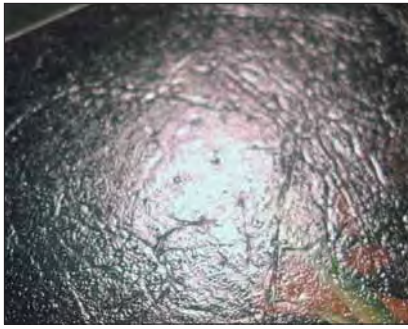


Photo 14: The tiny holes in perforated films melt together during the heat mounting process making them all melt together and disappear, but unfortunately they will transfer to the surface of a resurfaced or retextured laminate.



Photo 15: Regular clay coat foamboard and gloss laminate will produce a wrinkle that depresses into the board giving a deeper wrinkled effect, and the gloss shows more texture.



Photo 16: Matte laminate reflects less light and the harder surface gatorfoam reduces the wrinkles to a surface rather than imbedded appearance.

Substrates Impact Texture

The materials chosen for a wrinkled retexture will impact the end result. A gloss laminate will reflect more light and better show the wrinkles, and the softness or hardness of the substrate will also affect it. A regular clay coat foamboard and gloss laminate will produce a wrinkle that depresses into the

board giving a deep wrinkle effect, which is very visible (Photo 15). A matte or satin laminate on a hard surface 4 ply or Gatorfoam will reduce compressed wrinkles and reflects less light (Photo 16).

Technique Recap

Laminates mount for 5 to 9 minutes at 185°F to 225°F, depending

on manufacturer. If there are blotches between the laminate and porous print it has not been kept in the press long enough, or the pressure is inadequate for the substrate thickness. Place the project back in the press for the initial amount of laminating time plus additional time to correct this problem, and/or make sure

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mechanical press pressure is properly adjusted.

For resurfacing, place a smooth nonperforated release liner, not release paper, over the mounted print and remount five more minutes at 185°F to 200°F. For retexturing, place a wrinkled release liner over the mounted print and remount 5 more minutes at F185-200. Always mount and laminate the artwork completely prior to resurfacing or retexturing. Using regular release paper for this process. The silicone is different on release paper than release liners and may leave white blotches on the laminate surface.

Always mount and laminate nonporous photos or prints using correct perforation techniques and overlay foam first, so the air



Photo 17: Upper left corner is traditional sponge texture, lower left is wrinkled retexturing, right side is smoothed resurface. A sampler like this is a wonderful front counter sales tool.

may escape. Using a perforating tool and nonperforated vinyl film allows for laminating creativity but will indeed slow down the daily laminating of nonporous photographs.

Variation on a Theme

If the theme is a gloss laminated image, then the variation on that theme is one roll of laminate as a traditional sponge texture, resurfaced smooth surface, or a retextured wrinkled look. All three available from the same roll of gloss, satin, or matte laminate (Photo 17). A little creativity can really bring in the dollars. ■

Chris A. Paschke, CPE, GCF, Mounting Editor, owns Designs Ink in Tehachapi, CA, featuring commercial custom framing, fine art/graphic design, and industry consulting. Specializing in mounting, matting, design creativity, and fine art, she works with industry leaders and has taught for the National Conference. She has written two books on mounting: "The Mounting and Laminating Handbook" (now in its second edition) and "Creative Mounting, Wrapping, and Laminating." She can be contacted at www.designsinkart.com.



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