

Specialized CMC Mat Designs

Using a CMC, you can easily produce creative mat designs again and again, such as a diploma frame incorporating V-grooves, debossing, drawing, and cutting

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Computerized mat cutting technology continues to improve, and custom framers are finding more and more creative ways to make unique and profitable mats using their machines. CMCs enable framers to make mats that traditional straight-line or circle/oval cutters could not produce.

One area in which a CMC can be used creatively is with diploma framing. This is important to many customers, as they want unique and beautiful framing for an official document of academic achieve-

ment. Framing the diploma might be a personal reward, or perhaps a customer is having it framed as a gift for a family member, friend, or business associate. Since the cost of a college education can exceed the price of a car or even a house, customers often think nothing of spending a few hundred dollars for beautiful

framing of the diploma that is the result of all that time and money.

Some mass producers have come up with attractive,



Using a CMC, a custom diploma frame can be created that combine debossing, V-grooves, and pen lines that present a degree with the surroundings that match the investment behind it.

standardized diploma frame designs using the colors and logos for certain schools. These frames, which vary greatly in quality and price, are generally available to consumers online or in college bookstores. The pricing is competitive, but often the materials are of lower quality than a custom framer would use. To compete with such mass-produced, school-specific frames, a custom framer needs something special

in a design. The one shown here takes diploma frame design a step further, but the price can still be quite reasonable.

Since beautiful, classic architecture is often found in academic buildings, this mat was designed with that architectural theme. This may was designed using Corel



Cut the design in mats of two different colors and switch their fallouts, either inlaid (gray fallout) or overlaid (red fallout) on an under-mat of any color. If local school colors are involved, combine the leftover perimeter and fallout to use for a future order.

Draw X4 with a Valiani CMC, but other CAD programs and CMCs can be used equally as well. Similar designs of this complexity can also be done with a Gunnar or Wizard CMC's proprietary program.

Most school color themes involve two colors, so

this design can be inlaid using two colors in a single mat layer, and the colors can be interchangeable. For example, scarlet and gray are the colors for the Ohio State University, so the cutout portion of the mat could be gray and the perimeter part scarlet, or vice versa. This school is in my market area, so I

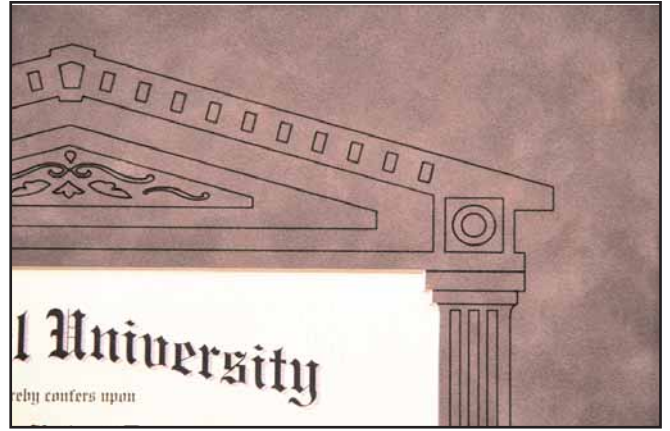


Cutting the design in V-grooves shows shadows as well as color and makes the design more visually prominent than debossing or drawing alone. Using a color-core mat adds even more visual interest. Certain elements of the design can be drawn or debossed if they are too detailed for V-grooving.

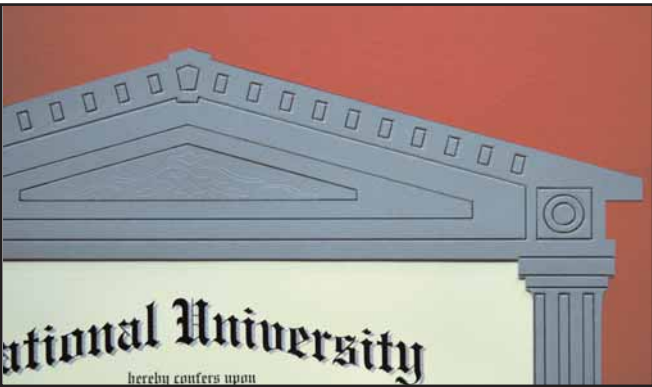
When a design includes V-grooves on a color core mat with some details debossed, the results can be dramatic especially when the background color is a darker tone.



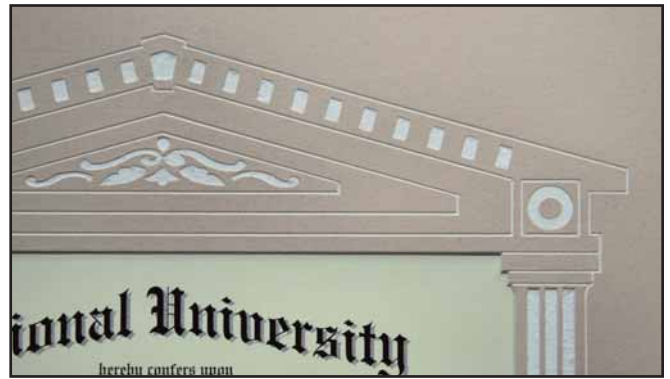
For a subtle decorative effect, the single operation of debossing shows the design only as shadows. If your CMC accessories include fine, medium, and wide debossing tips, use them in different combinations to emphasize certain parts of the design.



Using a CMC pen attachment, drawing a design on a mat goes quickly and usually results in a bolder look than just debossing.



Combining an ink drawing over a debossed design adds even more impact, adding depth as well as color.



If a CMC will only cut, you can reduce the blade depth to cut parts of the design in the manner of an opening, then skin away the mat's top paper to reveal the core. This works well in combination with V-grooving.

pre-cut an inventory of mats using different shades of the two colors, some in scarlet-on-gray and an equal number in gray-on-scarlet. The design can be created using any colors, and it can be scaled to fit any size diploma. If a double or triple mat is desired, accent colors can be used inside the design's enlarged opening.

For a subtle visual effect, the design can be debossed on a single mat without cutting the perimeter. For just a little emphasis, the design can be debossed and then inlaid in a complimentary color. If your CMC has the capability to draw, you can produce the design using pens of black, white, silver, or any other color. Cutting V-grooves for all or part of the design produces a textured alternative. Debossing, V-grooving, and drawing together can make a richly textured, colorful mat.

The cost of materials is equal to that of routine framing with a rectangular mat window, but for a unique design like this, it would be fair to charge at

least four times your normal mat price or more. Each operation used to produce the design--debossing, drawing, V-grooving, and cutting--takes machine time,



of suede mats as well as on standard paper surfaces. Pens with permanent, "archival" ink are recommended.



Fine details that do not cut or V-groove well, such as text smaller than about 1", look better debossed or inked. The text here is about 1/4" tall. It can be easily changed or removed from the design.

which eventually causes wear. A slight amount of extra labor would be required to set up the prepared design in a CMC, but you could do other work while the machine produces the mat.

The main cost of specialty mats lies in the work needed to design them. For example, this design took about four hours using my Corel Draw program, and minor modifications have been made several times since then. The expense of designing the mat can be recovered by selling perhaps 10 or 20 of them, and from that point forward, the profit potential can be substantial. In any case, be sure to charge appropriately and do not give away your expertise.

Since this sort of design would be stored in your CMC and easily adaptable, you could add or subtract features, such as the name of the school, the degree earned, or a generic phrase. For example, the English translation for "Perceptum, Fortuno" is "Learn, Prosper."

A skilled mat designer could reproduce a school logo, but be careful to obtain written permission from a school before doing that. Many schools, especially large universities, jealously guard the copyrights for their logos and names. If a customer wants to include the school logo, similar to the hot-stamped gold logo often used in ready-made diploma frames from school bookstores or online (for which a licensing fee was surely paid), then you might be able to place a purchased logo item in a mat opening separate from the diploma. Decals for car windows, embroidered patches for shirts and jackets, and other school paraphernalia are generally available from a school's bookstore or online. A customer can also provide these items to include in the framing.



Standard ink pens can be used in the drawing attachments on CMCs. This technology is very useful in creative matting.

This sort of diploma framing design can set your shop apart from other diploma framing sources that your customers might have access to, so you can earn orders you might not otherwise receive. This and other such designs are unique, adaptable, and relatively easy to produce once you have created them as cutting files in your CMC. You can design specialty mats for other themes, too, such as NASCAR, which might include the shape of a car. Specialty mats for professional football, baseball, and other sports might include the shape of the ball, a stadium, or the field of play. Let your creativity guide you to new and profitable sales with creative mat designs. ■



James Miller, MCPF, GCF, founded his framing business, ArtFrame, Inc., in suburban Columbus, OH, in 1988, where he specializes in the preservation framing of art, heirlooms, and three-dimensional objects. Miller, who holds a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration, has served as chairman of the PPFA Certification Board, where he helped develop the MCPF exam, and has been chairman of the FACTS Education Committee. He is also the author of *The Complete Guide to Shadowboxes and Framing Objects*, published by PFM Seminars Books.