

SHOW ME THE MONEY

James Miller, MCPF, GCF

A FRONT AND BACK DISPLAY OF AN AMERICAN CURRENCY COLLECTION REQUIRED A SINGLE DEEP RABBIT FRAME AND MYLAR ENCAPSULATION

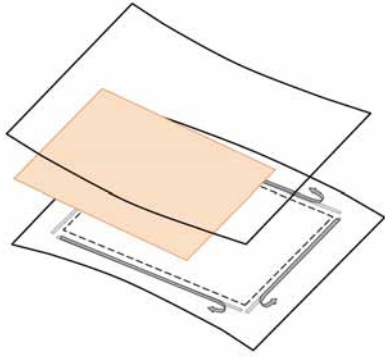
Money certainly is collectible for practical purposes, but some money is collectible for purposes other than saving and spending. A customer recently brought us a unique framing project because he wanted to display and protect his collectible currency, including bills that have historical significance and are no longer in circulation. This series of frames provided a reminder that the designs of currency bills include superb details and several artistic elements, such as beautiful lacework and scrolled embellishments, in addition to portraits, emblems, and symbols. In some respects, a currency bill is a work of art in its own right.

FRAME DESIGN

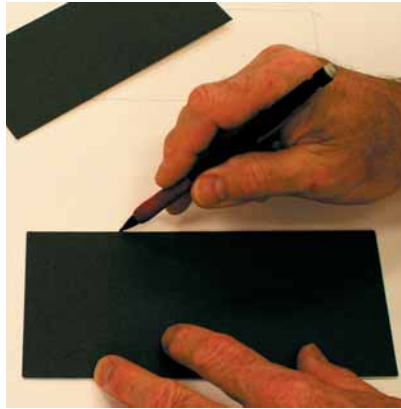
The designs for each of these front-back framing projects were similar and designed to be relatively uncomplicated to draw attention to the fine details on the framed bills. Double-mat colors were matched to the colors in the bills. The customer wanted to be able to see the backs of all of



This close-up shows how all of the item's edges are visible in an encapsulation mount. The back is entirely visible, as well. Front and back window mats cover the tape strips that hold the clear film sheets together on both sides of the item. Although the Melinex 516 clear film used here has a glossy surface, its high clarity makes it almost invisible.



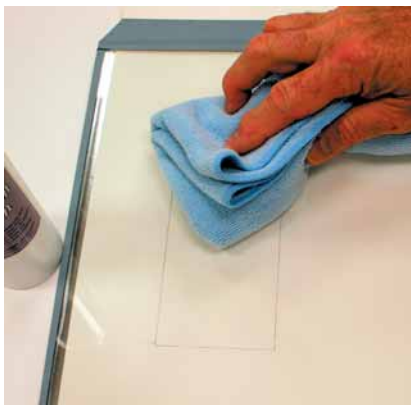
Clear polyester film always has a curvature. Placing the top and bottom layers of clear film with their convex sides together assures the tightest, neatest-looking encapsulation mounts.



The shapes of the bills were traced on a scrap piece of matboard, making positioning of the clear film pieces and tape lines more precise.



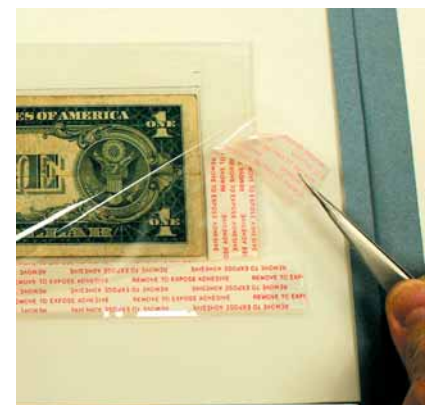
Melinex 516 clear polyester film was trimmed from a roll using the manual mat cutter. This machine enables the clear film pieces to be measured and cut quickly and precisely.



A piece of glass was taped to the table over the traced shapes of the bills. Glass makes a good cutting surface, and it can be thoroughly cleaned to avoid scratching the clear film. Taping all around the perimeter of the glass holds it in place and prevents injury.



A piece of clear film is centered over the tracing, and strips of double-sided tape are placed within 1/4" of the perimeter. A bill is centered, and release paper is removed from one of the tape strips.



After the tape strips have been placed on the bottom piece of clear film and a bill centered within the tape strips, the top layer of clear film is attached by pulling out the tape strips' release papers, making sure the bill does not shift and contact the tape. This is the riskiest step of the encapsulation procedure.

the bills, but it was not necessary to use back-to-back mouldings to do that. Instead, we used a double mat on the front and a single mat on the back. The mats were cut on our computerized mat cutter, for precisely matched openings front and back.

Matching antique gold frame mouldings were selected that had decorative features similar to those on the money and a rabbet depth sufficient to enclose the thicker-than-normal framing packages. If the frames had been deeper, spacers could have been added. If the frames had been shallower, a mat could have been omitted or a back box could have been added. Museum Glass provided the best possible view and reduced reflections on the front. Conservation Clear was selected for the back of each frame.

MOUNTING

Because the customer wanted to see the edges and the entire

back of each bill, clear film encapsulation was chosen as the most appropriate mounting method, using 3-mil thick Melinex 516 clear polyester film. This film has high clarity, a high slip treatment for easier handling, and no invasive chemical coatings. It is known to be chemically inert and suitable for preservation mounting, since it is one of the few clear films tested and approved for framing applications at the U.S. Library of Congress. We stock rolls of Melinex 516, so we use our bench-mounted mat cutter to accurately trim the pieces of clear film to the sizes needed.

Making just one clear film encapsulation mount seems like a time consuming task because it requires careful preparation and some cleanup. But for projects like these, when more than two dozen mounts are to be made in one batch, the work goes rather quickly. First, tracings were made of the bills, which came in two sizes, on a piece of scrap matboard. Next, a piece of glass was taped over the



The final step of encapsulating each bill was to burnish the double-sided tape's adhesive.



The encapsulated bills were arranged on the inside of the back mat and attached by strips of double-sided tape, which was thoroughly burnished to activate the bond.



After the encapsulated bills were attached to the back mat and the adhesive burnished, additional strips of double-sided tape were attached to the mounts to the inside of the top mat.

tracings to provide a smooth, easily cleaned surface that minimizes the possibility of dust or other abrasive debris scratching the clear film during the mounting process. Glass also provides a hard surface for burnishing the pressure-sensitive adhesive used for the taped mounts and makes a durable cutting surface for precise trimming of the film with a razor blade or X-Acto knife. Taping the glass edges to the table holds it in place and also prevents injuries.

The process of assembling the clear film encapsulation mounts was fairly simple. A trimmed-to-size piece of the film was placed on the glass, centered over the tracing. Strips of thin-ribbon, double-sided polyester tape with high quality acrylic adhesive were placed on the clear film no more than 1/4" away from the perimeter of the item, shown by the tracing under the glass. ATG and other carrier-less tapes are not suitable for encapsulation mounting. Generally, such tapes are too thick for the purpose of encapsulation, and the adhesive tends to flow or migrate.

After that, a bill was centered on the bottom layer of clear film. The release paper was removed from one strip of tape and another piece of clear film carefully positioned on top, making sure the bill did not shift and come into contact with the exposed double-sided tape. Next, the remaining release paper strips were pulled away to expose the adhesive and bond the two pieces of clear film together. Finally, all tape lines were thoroughly burnished to activate the pressure-sensitive adhesive and create the strongest possible bond.

A clear film encapsulation mount holds the item three ways:



The back Conservation Clear Glass was placed in the frame, almost filling the moulding's rabbit depth. The thickness of the whole assembly was calculated to fit into the selected frame.



Lascaux 360 contact adhesive was painted on the back of the frame, and a "trim mat" was glued on to cover the fitting points and the unfinished part of the moulding, giving the frame's back a neater, more attractive appearance. WallBuddies and stickers completed the job.

1. Pressure between the two sheets of clear film is enhanced by placing their convex sides together. (All clear film has curvature.)
2. Double-sided tape within 1/8" of the item's perimeter provides a "pinching action" between the clear film layers, keeping the item centered.
3. Static charge, a common characteristic of plastics, attracts the layers together.

MAT PACKAGE ASSEMBLY

After all of the currency bills were encapsulation mounted, they were attached to the inside surface of the back mat, using strips of double-sided tape and making sure each bill was centered in its opening. The inside of the top mat was prepared with strips of double-sided tape above each opening and then carefully positioned on top of the back mat/mounted bills assembly. Throughout the mounting and assembly process, the double-sided tape strips were burnished in order to activate the pressure-sensitive adhe-

sive. Finally, with the mat package assembled, pressure was applied to the tape strips one last time by impact (pounding with fists) to create the strongest bond possible for the pressure sensitive adhesive on the double-sided tape.

FITTING

With the frame face-down on the table, the front glazing of Museum Glass was dropped into place, followed by the assembled front mat/encapsulated bills/back mat package. Next, the back glazing of Conservation Clear was dropped into the frame, which nearly filled the rabbet depth. Before fitting points were used to close up the frame, 1/2" wide strips of scrap matboard were placed around the perimeter of the frame to provide a necessary pad between the glass and the fitting points.

After fitting points were installed and the whole assembly was inspected for debris under the glass, a final "trim mat" was glued to the back of the frame using Lascaux 360 contact adhesive. Like a dustcover, this mat may be torn off and disposed if it is necessary to open the

frame in the future. WallBuddies and stickers finished the job.

Front-back framing does not have to be a costly, complex project involving two frames. As you can see from these photos, careful planning and a neatly finished back on a standard frame moulding can provide a cost-effective and visually pleasing alternative that can satisfy most customers' requirements when the back of the items framed must be visible. ■



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.

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