



Delicate Mat Embossing

Framing miniature artworks can be a challenge. How do you perfectly enhance a small piece of art without overwhelming it? Antique tintype photographs with their embossed mounts (both paper and metal) offer a wonderful source of inspiration. The embossed surrounds on tintypes are often very detailed and delicate, yet beautifully understated. The embossing gives the artwork presence and draws the viewer in to look closer.

To replicate these designs with tools available today, sometimes it is necessary to look outside the framing industry to one that is closely related—scrapbooking. The range of tools available for embossing and die-cutting in scrapbooking is extensive and relatively inexpensive. The following mat design combines the paper embossing and die-cutting techniques used in the scrapbooking industry with the mat cutting materials and techniques used in framing.

The delicately embossed mat design is

Embossed mats give artwork a strong presence, drawing the viewer in for a closer look

inspired by one of many techniques used in scrapbooking. The white-on-white design adds an understated elegance to the miniature “Queen Bee” artwork, which measures only 1¼”.

The outside frame measurement is 7 ½” x 9 ½”. This type of embossing is also suitable for small photographic portraits, duplicating the look of antique mounts.

You will need:

- Cuttlebug Embossing and Die Cutting Machine
- Cutting and Embossing Die (a Spellbinders Nestabilities “Gold Majesty Circles” was used)



The white-on-white embossed design adds an understated elegance to the miniature “Queen Bee” artwork, which measures only 1-1/4”.

- Cuttlebug “A” Plate (included with the machine)
- Cuttlebug “B” Plate (included with the machine)
- Cuttlebug “C” Plate (sold separately)
- Tan rubber embossing mat (sold separately)
- Magnetic mat (sold separately)
- A5 sized (5”x7”) card stock (190-220gsm is ideal)
- Bainbridge Alphasag matboard, or any 4-ply solid core board

Step 1 – Embossing the card stock. The card stock is wound through the Cuttlebug machine twice: once to cut, and the second time to emboss. Plates A, B, and



A display of butterfly frames showcasing different techniques includes embossing, French matting on a cove mat, and decorative papers.



Adding an outer mat to the design makes the frame larger and adds a pop of color.



An alternative die was used to replicate an antique miniature photo mount.

C are all different thicknesses to ensure the correct amount of pressure is applied through the press.

The first “sandwich,” to die-cut the paper, is as follows (from the bottom up):

- Plate A
- Plate C
- Magnetic mat with die in place, with ridges facing up
- Card stock (if there is a textured side you prefer, place that face down)
- Plate B

To begin, wind the sandwich through the machine. You will need some strength to wind the sandwich through. The rollers are meant to apply substantial pressure. You may hear popping or crackling sounds, which is normal. It is also normal for the die to cut through the card stock and into the B Plate, leaving impressions on the plate.

Once the sandwich has gone through, carefully remove the top B Plate and bottom C Plate, ensuring the paper stays complete and in place on top of the cutting/embossing die on the magnetic mat. You may be tempted to remove the paper from the die at this stage, but keep the paper in place to ensure that the next step, the embossing placement, is accurate.



A Cuttlebug embossing and die-cutting machine was used to emboss the paper. This versatile machine and available dies are used in the scrapbooking industry.



A Spellbinders Nestabilities' Gold Majesty Circles die was used to cut and emboss the paper.



The die with ridges was placed face up on the magnetic mat.



The card stock was placed on top of the magnetic mat with the die, followed by the B Plate.



The sandwich was rolled through the Cuttlebug machine twice, once to cut the paper and once to emboss.



The result was the completed cut and embossed paper.

The second “sandwich,” to emboss the paper, is as follows (from the bottom up):

- Plate A
- Magnetic mat with die and paper in place
- Tan rubber embossing mat
- Plate C

Wind the new, second sandwich through the machine. Depending on the thickness of the card stock, you may need to add one or two extra sheets on top of the sandwich to apply additional pressure if it runs through too easily. Mid-way through, you can wind the handle back a little to add the extra card. After completing the embossing process, remove the die and all the plates to reveal your embossed card.

Step 2 – Adhering the embossed card to the matboard.

Using Lineco pH Neutral Adhesive, spot glue the embossed card to a matching 4-ply solid core matboard. Use just enough glue to hold the card in place to cut the window opening. It's acceptable for the die cut edges to be loose since it adds to the dimension of the design. Bainbridge Alphasag 100% cotton in Pearl White was used for the example.

A matching matboard is preferred, since it is more forgiving in the chance that the window opening will be cut slightly off center. You may notice that the circle window opening in the example is not perfectly centered. Remember that this embossing is done by hand and not by a commercial die cutting machine. When you're creat-

ing something that is “hand-made,” slight imperfections can be “commercially acceptable.”

Leave approximately 1½” of matboard around the card. This extra can be trimmed later. A fall-out from a previous mat was used, which is ideal because the cut edges are exactly 90 degrees. This helps when inserting the matboard in the CMC. Lastly, place a piece of glass and a couple of weights on top to dry.

Step 3 – Cutting the window opening. In the example, the window opening is 2½”. As accurately as possible, mark the matboard so that the embossed element (not necessarily the paper) is centered on the matboard. The left and right measurements and the top and bottom measurements need to be exactly the same as each other. Then, measure the outside width and height of the matboard very carefully.

The “Standard Input Mode” on the Gunnar Mat Creator software was used to design the circle cut. The outside measurements are input first, then the opening measurements. The border sizes are calculated automatically and, most importantly, the cut opening is centered. Cut the matboard from the back, with the embossing face down in the machine. Don’t forget to set the blade depth for a 5-ply

board. Do not set the machine to cut the outside mat.

If you’re using a previously cut mat fall-out, try to have the perfectly cut, 90-degree mat edges underneath the CMC clamps. This will help with the accuracy of the window cut.

Assemble the framing mat package as per usual, and then trim the matboard to size. This is a personal preference; some like to see the artwork in the completed matboard before determining the final mat proportions.


The picture frame moulding is from Larson-Juhl’s Marais collection in silver (337592) and measures 1” wide. The image was printed as a giclee print using an Epson Stylus Pro 3880 Printer onto Epson Cold Press Bright archival-quality paper. A very pale watercolor wash in yellow was painted over the image to make the background color darker to match the card stock. **PFM**

Note: The “Queen Bee” image is available as a free, high resolution download from www.thegraphicsfairy.com/antique-image-gorgeous-bee.

Jodie Prymke, CGF, Jodie Prymke, CGF, is an international award-winning frame designer and PFGV Certified Guild Framer. Her boutique framing gallery, Jodie Prymke Fine Art Framing, in North Adelaide, South Australia, opened in March 2008. She specializes in unique frame designs, French matting, and frame restoration.

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331 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1/2"x60yd roll	\$3.75 72@ \$3.15
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553 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1/2"x36 yd roll	\$3.39 72@ \$3.09
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