

# Overlapping Openings

*A technically easy and visually effective device that adds to a design.*

A recurring question in the world of custom framing is, what are other ways framers can add decorative elements to matting without settling for the typical cutout in the top mat? My answer is simple: overlap the items.

One philosophy of composition holds that an arrangement should appear to be one whole, not scattered pieces. The tactics to accomplish this in a mat design might be for all the items to be in closely spaced orderly rows, or their collective outside borders might form a tidy rectangle—or the items could overlap.

Simply overlapping on the design screen is not enough. Overlapping becomes a viable design device because CMC software can also merge the overlapping items into a single new shape. Every CMC program will have a different term for this merging, and it will function in different ways. In the Wizard software, there is a button to click called Group Selection.

## Openings Overlapping a Letter

Monograms are common in all the decorative arts. Letters can be such pretty shapes, and too often in mat design, letters have been relegated to diminutive afterthoughts at the side of an opening. When openings overlap letters, though, it is almost a requirement that the let-



ter be larger. Pieces of it will be missing where the openings overlap, and the letter still needs to be identifiable and attractive.

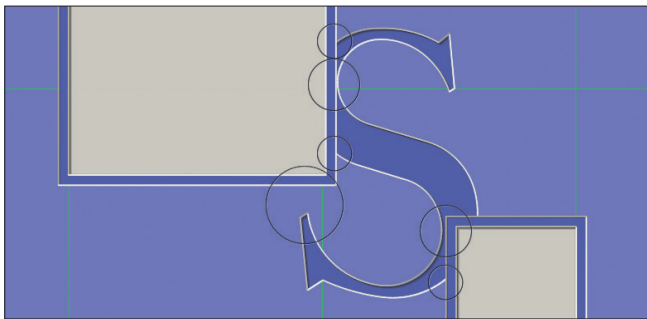
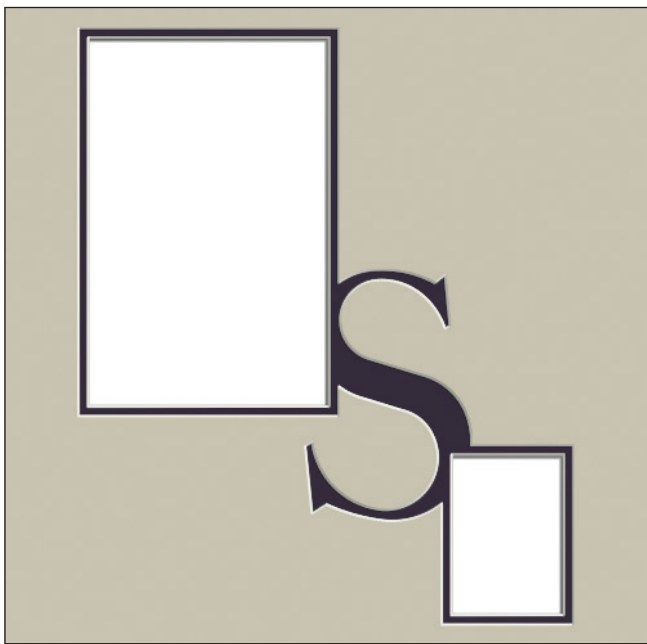
## Technical Considerations

When items overlap, cutting problems may

Think of these constructed ornaments as vehicles for adding color accents. The trapezoids create angled wide spots at the sides of the reveal that are 0.13" wide and 2.75" high. The bottom layer of the triangles open 0.35" wide spots in the bottom layer for the blue accents. Every template library has a dozen straight and curved shapes that can be added as accents like these. This art deco illustration is ripe for this kind of ornament, but it is surprising how universal geometric accents are if the colors and sizes are right.



**Brian Wolf** began framing pictures while attending Iowa State University. In 1973, he won the Janice Petersen Andersen award for outstanding design student. He began demonstrating his hand-carving technique for mats at conventions and teaching for the PPFA. Brian started his own framing business in Cedar Rapids, IA, in 1983. Since 1989, he has focused on leading workshops around the world on his matting techniques. He has authored books, appeared in videos, and contributed to trade magazines. He joined Wizard International, where he contributed his artistic touch to product development. He continues his work with Wizard through education, events, and design content.



*Top: When openings overlap letters, the letter can be larger. Parts of it will be hidden under openings, and it needs to be identifiable. This S is 3.75" high—significantly larger than its minimum recommended height of 1.5". Think of what might be included in the blank areas: more openings, keepsake paper items, handwritten inscriptions.*

*Bottom: As the items are moved to visualize different arrangements, watch the circled areas. The small circles show spots where angles may become too sharp, the middle size circles show spots where the openings should not overlap the curves of the letter, and the large circle shows a spot where the separation cannot be smaller than 0.2" without causing structural problems.*

arise. In the S project, as with most overlapping projects involving curved elements, there are three things to watch; the illustration above has circles that point these out.

The three small circles show intersections where angles might be formed that are too sharp to cut nicely. This particular arrangement shows angles that will cut fine, but imagine the letter and the openings moved farther apart. As the openings intersect different points on the curves, the angle of the intersection becomes more and more pointed. The bevel would become delicate, and it will self-destruct as it is being cut.

The two mid-sized circles show spots where the sides of the openings should not touch—and certainly not overlap—the curves of the letter. If they do, unsightly flat spots would be joined into the curves of the letter as the soft-

ware merges the overlapping shapes. This possible overlapping is normally checked by the desire for the letter to remain readily identifiable. Still, be watchful.

The large circle at the left shows a spot that is unrelated to overlapping, but it is a persistent concern as openings and decorative items are arranged. There is a small separation between the tail of the letter and the opening. These small separations need to be at least 0.2 inch. The overcuts on the back of the mat will continue past the bevel. If another opening is too close, these overcuts might be visible as nicks in the adjacent bevel. Or the overcuts might slice up the narrow strip of matboard between the items, making handling the mat during assembly risky.

## Diamonds Linking Openings

A row of openings is a daily project. Variations are always welcome. Here are two suggestions:

Fanning is a tool that lines up the openings and rotates each item differently to distribute the items along an arc. If there is not a fanning utility in every CMC's software, there is certainly a rotation tool. The second variation is the overlapping diamonds between the openings. Many different shapes could be used between the openings for various decorative effects.

## More Technical Considerations

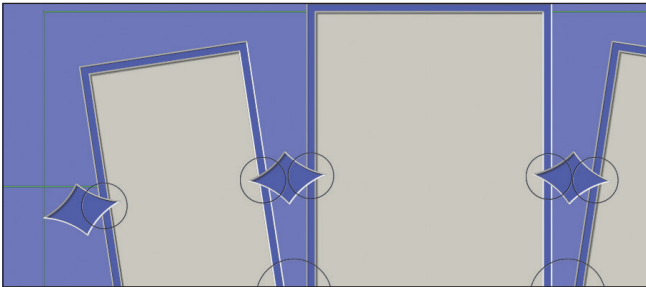
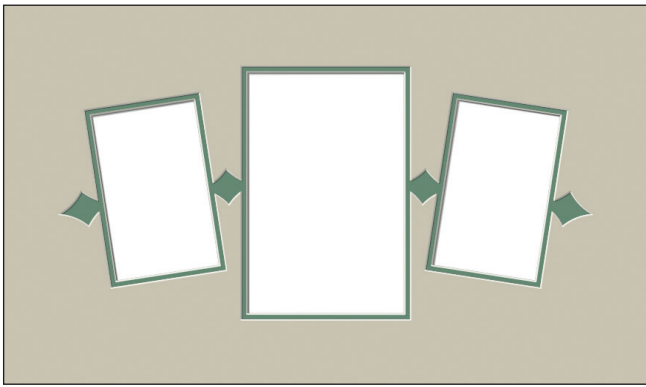
Much like the previous project, there are points to watch as these diamonds overlap (p. 16). The small circles across the top show reminders that overlapped intersections should not generate sharp angles. They also illustrate the reverse of the final point in the previous example; just as the strip of matboard between items needs to be at least 0.2", the gap in a cut formed by overlapping items—these diamonds, for instance—also needs to be at least 0.2". Once again, the overcuts on the back of the mat continue past the bevel. If the gap is too narrow, these overcuts may nick the bevel on the other side of the gap.

The large circles at the bottom show yet another situation where items need to be far enough apart that structure of the finished mat is not impaired. Visually, the bottom corners in a fanned arrangement look best if there is more than the required 0.2" separation on the top layer. In this example, the separation is 0.375" on the top layer.

## Building an Ornament

Even with all the letters and silhouette cutouts in the CMC programs' libraries, the perfect addition for a particular



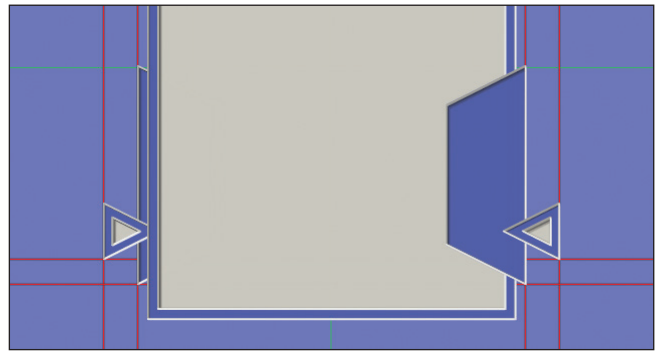


Top: The three openings and the four diamonds are lined up and fanned in the software. The items are spaced close enough that the diamonds overlap and connect the adjacent openings. For reference, the outer diamonds are rotated 12°, the small openings 9°, and the inner diamonds 5°; gentle fanning to keep the presentation elegant.

Bottom: The center opening is 4" x 6"; the outer openings are 2.5" x 4". The diamonds are 1.25" x 0.8" high. The small circles show spots where angles should not become too sharp. The overlapping diamonds must also create a gap of at least 0.2" in the sides of the openings to avoid cutting problems. These fanned arrangements look better if they are separated even farther; here they are 0.375" apart.

picture is often elusive. But surprising things can be built using the most basic resources. Think of these ornaments less as artistic expositions and more as vehicles to add and expand spots of color. The programs' template libraries have geometric shapes galore that can be easily manipulated into the necessary size, shape, and position. Overlapping and merging are then the keys to integrating these shapes into the opening.

The ornaments seen in the design on page 12 were constructed using two different template shapes; a trape-



Decorative elements can be assembled from tiny opening shapes. The trapezoids are 2.75" high and 1" wide. The triangles have two layers with a 0.11" reveal. They are 0.35" high and wide. Once all the parts are in place, merge them into one shape.

zoid and a triangle. The trapezoid is a single layer so that it adds a wider vertical area to the sides of the inner reveal. The triangle is a two-layer opening so that there is a cutout in the bottom layer for an accent color.

Customers would find more things that need framing if they knew how eye-catching and unique presentations could be. Overlapping is a technically easy and visually effective device that can change the attitude and add color—particularly with multiple-opening projects, when framers are almost always called upon to be the artist. **PFM**

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