Image Presentation in the Digital World

Mounting

You have worked so hard on your projects and photographs. It is time to spend a moment on presentation. The matt and perhaps ultimately frame that surround your photograph should support the feelings and ideas that you were trying to convey. They should never get in the way of your image but isolate and help the viewer see your composition.

Your choices at this point of your work complete the process. They are essential to the final effect that your photograph will have on your viewer.

Matts and frames should support the work and will usually be the last thing you notice. While there are exceptions, we want the photographs to be more important than the matt or frame.

There are two main reasons for mounting a print. One is to hold it flat so that it is easy to look at and another is to isolate the print from the environment so that whatever is behind the image will not distract from it. Therefore, sturdy mount boards and neutral colors are needed. The print mount is not part of the image and should not interfere with it. Various colors and unusual tones should be avoided. White is most commonly used with gray or black also acceptable.

Even in color work, it is rarely recommended to use frames that are colorful. They can easily overpower the photograph. Your matt should enhance your image and not draw attention to itself.

It must also be "bottom weighted." The bottom will be thicker than the top. Without this, the matted photographs will feel top heavy. It is an optical illusion that has lead to a standard practice of making matts a bit larger on the bottom section. There can be as little as a ¼ of an inch and as much as 4 inches more on bottom than on top depending on the effect you want.

A window mat is a very nice way to present and protect your work. We have matt cutters in the darkroom if you would like to cut your own mats. You can also purchase precut mats. Precut matts are standard sizes, so cutting your own gives you freedom of size and dimensions. Be careful if you use precut matts that the aspect ratio (the relation of height to width) matches and suits your photograph.

Materials needed:
- Print
- 3 sheets Mounting Board (preferably neutral pH acid free rag board)
- Linen tape to attach window to backing
- Corners or archival tape for attaching image.

Mat Cutting

These instructions are specifically for the Model 750 Mat Cutter by Logan. Many items are true of most mat cutters you will encounter.

1. Prepare the mat cutter by getting a backing board. All mat cutters require a backing hard to get a clean, non-frayed cut. The backing board should be not less than 4" wide and no more than 1/8" thick.
2. Insert a fresh blade or check the current blade with a test cut. An old blade will not give a nice cut. Be sure to use the correct blades for the particular mat cutter. This will make a significant difference.
3. Prepare your boards by measuring in light pencil on the wrong side of the board. Make the lines as longer than the opening of the mat. Measure 3 times, cut once!!! After measuring three times, hold the image over the opening and visually see that it fits!
4. Place the board under the cutting arm. On the 750 Mat Cutter, the line is the indicator of both start and stop, but the thickness of the board, the age of the mat cutter and other factors, will make the
exact start and stop point different. Do a test mat first. Use the anti-creep button to stop the blade from overcutting in the beginning.
5. Cut the mat with even pressure. Be sure that the cutting head is sitting on the part of the board that will be cut out i.e. inside the window, not on the final mat itself. If this is not done, then the bevel will be backwards.
6. Carefully remove the mat from the cutter. If the window does not freely come out, use a blade to release the corners. Use a diamond file (for nails) to smooth the edges if rough. (If the cut did not go through to the front of the mat, it is almost impossible to reposition and recut a mat accurately.)
7. Erase all pencil marks from the back. Hinge the mat to a backing board. Attach the image. Options include taping the image in place with archival tape, or using archival corners.

**Thoughts on Framing and Matting Choices**

Framing and matting choices are VERY much personal preference. The following are some major points to consider in choosing your size, color and style of presentation:

1) What will suit the image best? Does it need space? Is it very vertical or horizontal? What will make the individual piece most powerful? Ask this in terms of orientation, size, color and frame type. Remember the image is the main star of this presentation!
2) What will suit the group of work best? If it is a group of work that will hang together (a portfolio) then choose a consistent approach to the matting and framing.
3) What will make you most productive as an artist? Consider standard sizes when possible. I can buy frames cheaper if they are standard size (i.e. 16x20 or 14x18). I can get nice boxes at somewhat reasonable prices. Same sized images are easier to store and will be less easily damaged. This is not a reason to choose inappropriate sized frames, but if you can say "A 15x19 looks just a little bit better than the 16x20 to me," ask HOW much better! Could you change image size so that you can use a standard size?

As a rule, an 8x10 could look good on 14x18 or 16x20 mats. An 11x14 will need a 16x20 or a 20x24. If you are making a permanent wall display for your home or office, you could do each image separately - some landscape, some vertical, some one size, some another. If you wanted to make a portfolio to show at a gallery, my advice is one size and make sure the images are your prime concern! People should look at the pictures NOT the mats! Keep your goals in mind, experiment and enjoy this important aspect of the creative process: presentation.

**General matt cutting recommendations**

- Use quality board
- Erase all pencil lines
- Measure three times, cut once!
- Take your time
- Always remember, the matt is there to set off your image, not visa versa!