

# MATBOARD MAGIC

*By Abby Fosco*

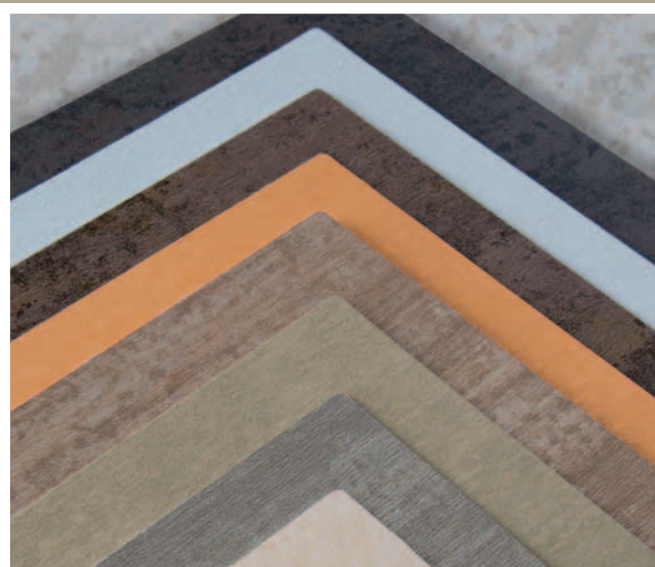


*Bullion from Crescent Cardboard's Couture Matboard collection features 100 percent cotton core and backing.*

**ADD EXCITEMENT TO YOUR DESIGNS AND BOOST YOUR  
BOTTOM LINE WITH SPECIALIZED MATBOARDS**



*Frank's Fabrics offers Flexible Fillet Mat Designs with hundreds of colors in sizes up to 40"x60".*



*Old World Metal mats from Nielsen Bainbridge are available in pure metallic and distressed finishes.*

“**T**here’s an old saying that says you are only as creative as you allow yourself to be,” says Alan Yaffe, president of Peterboro Matboards. That particularly holds true for matting and using specialized matboards in your frame designs. “Whether they have printed surfaces or use high-quality fabrics, specialized mats open completely new doors of expression for framers.”

In fact, once customers see the difference specialized matting can make, they are typically quite impressed. As PFM columnist Tim Franer observes, “Specialty matting gives framers an opportunity to enhance their final design and bring it to the next level.” The result? These enriched designs can increase profits and help create unique and profitable looks that can win the hearts and minds of even the most skeptical of consumers. With more varieties available than ever before, this has never been more achievable.

## DESIGN

What is specialty matting and what makes it so special? Common types of specialty mats include fabric, silk, metallic, suede, and other

specialized textures. Meg Smith, senior marketing manager at Larson-Juhl, says, “Specialized matboards really add an element of texture and warmth to many frame designs, sometimes highlighting a similar texture in the artwork.” Other types of surfaces, such as foil-covered mats, can enhance special effects in ways that can add real flash in a stylish manner.

With this in mind, the main design goal of specialty matting is to bring out the most eye-catching colors and features of the artwork. Jack Dempsey, art and communications manager of Crescent Cardboard, notes, “Artwork can truly stand out when unique custom features are added. This is especially true when adding the appealing look of specialized matting.”

The types of specialized mats vary from supplier to supplier. Kevin Mitchell, director of sales for Specialty Matboard, says, “We offer two types of facing paper options: printed patterns and standard colors. We also offer four types of core: cream, white, black, and alpha.” He also notes that his company’s RenaissanceSeries is one of their most popular specialty matting collections



*Pictured is Peterboro Matboard’s “Weave” line.*



Larson-Juhl's Artique Linen Gingersnap offers a looser weave and casual texture that consumers really love.



Specialty Matboard's Feathertop belongs to the Grassland series, which has a range of 10 colors.

because it “has a wide array of color choices and works well with almost any print.”

Specialized mat textures such as silk and metallic are among Nielsen Bainbridge's mat options and include silk-screened Heritage and Grotto mats and metallic Precious Metals, which work well with modern art trends. Nielsen's marketing manager, Susan Losco, says, “Popular art today, featuring metallic accents and dimensional surfaces, is wonderfully enhanced by the use of complementary specialty mats.”

Among the many varieties of specialized mat styles on the market today, fabric and linen mats rank high in popularity. Dempsey says, “Fabrics are by far Crescent's most popular specialized matboards. With styles ranging from rustic to refined, Crescent's Select Fabrics and Moorman Fabric Matboard collections include designs that appeal to virtually every customer. This makes the job of finding the right mat for any customer as easy as specifying a standard mat—but with more dramatic effect.”

“There's a lot more to offer to customers today



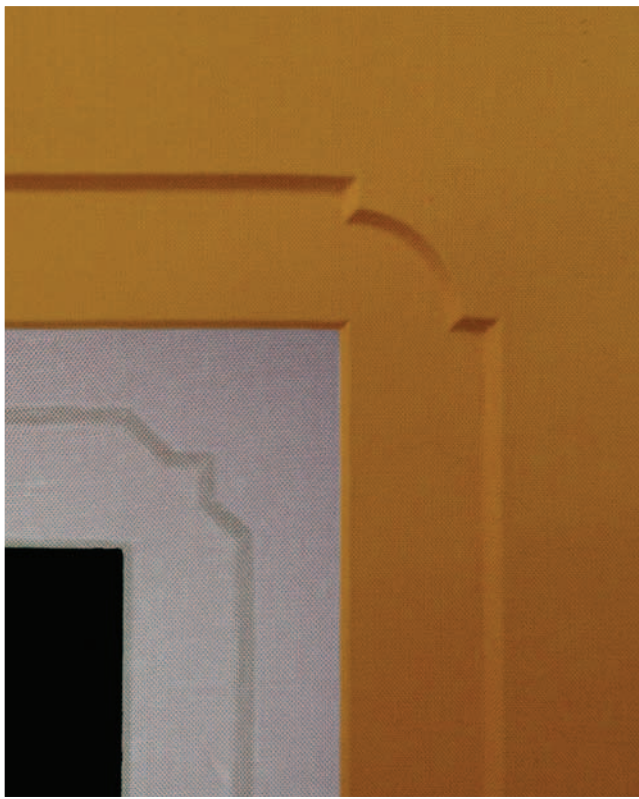
Crescent Cardboard's Shimmer Wovens has a white conservation core and backing, adding texture and drama to custom frames.

than just paper matboards,” says Larry Neuberg, president and owner of Framing Fabrics. “Framers can easily enhance their offerings by selling fabric-wrapped mats to enhance the beauty and value of almost any framing project, and it can be done in a very cost-effective way. A beautiful fabric mat doesn't cost as much as you might think, but the perceived value by the customer is very high.”

Many designers feel that every frame design can benefit from a fabric component. Linens and silks have a rich appearance and archival quality, for example, and are the most popular because that's what people are aware of.

The look that many customers tend to opt for is texture. Frank Chavez, owner of Frank's Fabrics, says that his best-selling fabric-wrapped mats “are white and off-white Linen on 4-ply matboard. Probably because white is the least-intrusive color and least likely to conflict with the art.”

Yaffe adds that Peterboro's neutral silks and linens “sell very well because they don't compete but add elegance.” What does this say about customers' view on specialty mats? Most clients want matting to enhance the essence and beauty of the piece being framed, and



*Embossed Mats from Frank's Fabrics consist of 8-ply mats with intricate corner designs over 4-ply mats.*

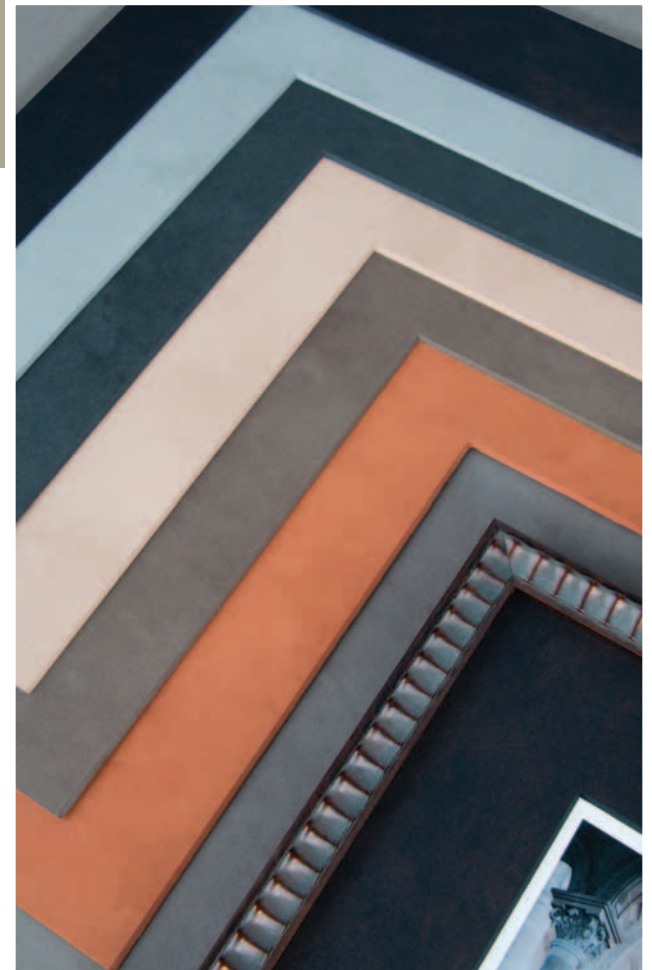
if specialty matting is of any interest to them, it helps create cohesion and sophistication in the designs they choose.

## PRICING AND SELLING

Many framers feel that stocking specialty mats can be costly—especially because matboard is only sold in full sheets. With the added markup due to specialized textures, stocking and selling specialty mats can appear to be more of a risk than a gain. However, proper pricing can overcome this issue and is an essential step towards generating profit from selling specialty mats.

PFM columnist and retail consultant Ken Baur says, “Keep your multipliers high, regardless of the price. You cannot afford to use lower multipliers on matboards like you can with glazing and moulding.” The reason for this, he says, is that “waste is higher with matboard since it only comes in one size.”

A common concern many framers have is that their customers won't want to pay more for specialty mats. The right retailing techniques, such as showcasing the mat's added design value, usually overcome this issue. Eye-catching retail displays will grab customers' atten-



*Nielsen Bainbridge's Rustic Essentials offer subtle texturing—100 percent conservation quality in a range of versatile, neutral hues.*

tion and open their minds to frame designs they didn't know were possible. Mitchell says, “The best strategy for selling specialty matboard is to frame a few specialty matting pieces and hang them in your shop for customers to view.”

Displaying in-store models, according to Losco, “is a great way to engage customers' interest and demonstrates how the product looks in its finished form.”

Display examples also introduce a whole different design option to customers who were previously unaware of specialty mat options. Smith says, “When you show consumers a specialty matboard, you are sure to ‘wow’ them.”

All in all, the advantages of designing and selling specialty matting are worth the extra inventory dollars. Not only will you increase profits for your business, but you will also stand out as a frame shop that provides unique, creative, and elegant frame designs. **PFM**