

### 3M Photo Mounting Paper – Larry Kilgore

The first time I mounted my own photo on a foam board, I'd heard about the difficulties of using spray glue with photos, so on my first visit to Hobby Lobby, I decided to be smart and buy self-adhesive foam board. The first problem I ran into, is self-adhesive foam board is expensive. A large self-adhesive foam board sized 40"x32" costs \$12. And I couldn't really mount too many of my 16"x24" prints on one. I'd fit 2 and sometimes 3, if I'd do a bit more photo cropping. This was getting expensive and averaged \$4-\$6 per print, and you waste a lot of foam board.

The other problem with self-adhesive foam board is it doesn't work very well. It's a great idea. Just peel off the backing sheet, carefully place your print, apply some pressure and it's mounted. A bit of trimming would make it look perfect (at first) but it invariably started to peel at the edges within 24 hours. I entered one in the Grabill Fair photo contest and won first place! But when I went to pick up my print, I was horrified to see it hanging there, a blue ribbon across it, and the print was half peeled off. What an embarrassment!

So I decided I'd just have to pony up and buy some spray glue. The first bottle I bought was a cheap Spray Adhesive "for mounting photos", a bargain at only \$3.95!. That had some funky cantilever nozzle and all it did was ooze out brown foam like toothpaste? Either I don't know what the heck I'm doing, or this can is bad. Whether it's too old or poor quality control, I'm pretty harsh on products in either category, so it went back for a refund.

Time to quit getting cheap and upgrade. Next I tried Krylon Super Quick Grip Spray Adhesive (\$10). That actually sprayed out of the can as expected, in a fine mist. Perfect (I thought). It was in the middle of the winter. All I had was a basement to do this in (at the recommended 50-85 degrees). I put down an old towel, figured I start on my Grabill Fair winner, and see if I could re-glue the edges. How do I keep it off the photo? I put the lid of a box on it and stuck the edges up with a stick. I sprayed quickly and smoothly. First the stick fell over and got glued inside the flap. I pulled it out, but a chunk stayed inside. I finally dug it out with a screw driver. It still left a lump on my print, and now my screwdriver is covered with glue. When I lifted it up, the picture and cardboard flipped over and stuck together. It all went in the trash can in a huff.

I next tried my own design: "The Advanced Card Board Box Gluing Chamber". That worked pretty good, but the more I did, the more the glue built up in the box, and it eventually got all over everything. I was trying to do 6 prints for the FW Photo Club. What a MESS! Then I started reading the can: "Extremely Flammable - Vapors may cause flash fires. Repeated or prolonged exposure **may affect the nervous system**". Great. I'm already known as "the mad photographer", this is all I need. So I turned on a small fan operated HEPA filter I had in the basement and went to bed. The next day the HEPA filter fan died. It was GLUED SHUT! I guess that's better than my lungs.

When the Garrett Art show was announced I scrambled to do my first matte and frame. I was in a panic (but that's another story). I bought some cheap frames and a book on Framing. In there, they talked about all the spray adhesives and something I'd never heard of before. Cold mounting. Not sure where the term comes from but that quickly led me on the internet to a product with a formal title of "3M Positionable Mounting Adhesive 568". They are sold in 11", 16", or 24" by 50 Feet rolls. It was expensive. Since I'm used to mounting 24" prints, I bought a 24"x50' roll for nearly 80 bucks. Since I'm working with 16" prints in the other dimension, and since you waste a little when you use it, that's roughly 37 prints per roll, or about \$2.25 per print. And that's just for what is essentially glue.

But the stuff was fantastic. Not only does it make no mess, but there is no aerosol involved. If you make a mistake you can simply peel your print off and reposition it. And don't worry, when you activate this stuff, it IS permanent. When you're done, your photo is permanently bonded to your mounting board, and if you try to peel it off, you'll only get shredded photo. It absolutely won't come off your mount! It's amazing.

## Supplies



- The 3M product comes with the two rolls shown, the blue spatula and the instruction page
- I recommend you add a pair of silk gloves. I like Terramar Thermasilk Glove Liners. White or black, but white shows dirt better. About \$13 on Amazon. (Also great for cold weather photography and as glove liners for projects like taking snowflake photos!)
- A small, soft rubberized roller. You will use this for years and it cleans with mild soap and water. You can get them at Hobby Lobby.

- Get your picture ready and keep the white borders on it for now.
- Buy some cheap foam board. I found some at Hobby Lobby one day in size 20"x30" in a 2-for-1 sale which translated into 99 cents each. And with some minor trimming I always squeeze two 24"x16" prints on each foam board. That comes to 50 cents per print. You can also use matte board in exactly the same way as the foam board as discussed in the rest of this article. I bought an entire grocery cart full of foam board, on sale for only 20 bucks.
- Add a nice X-Acto knife and a pack of spare blades.
- You will also need a straight edge to cut your foam board, but a Logan Matte cutter (or equivalent) is preferred.

### Mounting Instructions

1. Unroll the 3M paper as shown and curl your photo over the dry side with the wet side facing the back. Center it as best as you can then press down on your white border corners to make the photo slightly stick. **BE EXTREMELY CAREFUL TO NOT LET YOUR PRINT SIDE CURL UNDER AND GET ON THE STICKY SIDE OF THE PAPER.** The picture shows the BEST way to do this. I've found out the hard way.



2. Don't move anything or let your roll, roll-away. Put on your gloves or use your roller (I prefer the gloves at this point and use the roller for air bubbles). Smooth the photo out across the 3M paper. In this step you can actually peel off your photo and reposition it. You need to take your gloves off if you do this and peel **VERY SLOWLY**. Going too fast will remove the adhesive from the paper. Not a disaster, but inconvenient and inconsistent.



3. Keep one glove on to hold the picture in place, and cut the 3M paper roll away, then trim any small, sticky strips (with only one white glove on, try to avoid breaking out into a Michael Jackson song at this point). The glue can get on your gloves and it's hard to get off. However, if you get the glue on your fingers, it's easy to get off, just rub your fingers together and the glue balls up and you can toss it in the trash.



4. Don't do any picture trimming yet and don't worry if the picture is not exactly straight on the 3M paper. Remember, the paper only delivers the glue to your print and the paper itself ends up getting peeled off and thrown away. You will be trimming your foam or matte board later to perfect dimensions.

5. Lay the special protective paper that comes with the 3M roll, with the printed side down. Then place your print, pretty side down on the paper. Use the blue, 3M spatula to rub hard with overlapping strokes first horizontally, then vertically across the entire back of your picture surface. Spend some extra time pressing really hard on all the edges and corners while being careful not to let the spatula get underneath your photo (and scratch it) on a vigorous backstroke (sounds like I'm swimming??).



6. Get out your foam board, and cut it in half to use one-half for your print. Keep the other half for the next print.

7. Next, peel back one corner of your 3M paper, then hold that corner of the print down with the blunt end of your X-Acto, then slowly peel the 3M paper off the back of your print. Go REALLY SLOW and make it smooth. Watch the glue come off the 3M paper and onto your print. If you start to see a patch not transferring, stop, push the paper back down and "spot spatula", then continue. It's not a big deal if you don't get 100% of the glue off since it's some kind of killer glue I've never encountered before. But try to get it all transferred. I can transfer 100% every time now that I've had some practice.



8. Put your foam board down, center your photo over it. Put on your gloves and smooth out the photo on the foam board (not shown). Don't forget, your 3M glue has still not been activated yet and you can again reposition your photo on your foam board. Then put the special 3M protective paper on top, but this time with the printed side up. Then spatula across the special paper, pushing your photo back down into the foam board. This last step activates the 3M glue and makes it permanent.



9. Trim your edges off with your X-Acto knife.



10. At this point, use a straight edge or T-Square, or a Logan Matte cutter (or equivalent) to get a perfect, straight cut, while also squaring up your print on your mounting board. Take a little bit off every side to insure smooth edges and a good square.



11. Proudly display your mounted photo. Sorry, you'll never get it off the foam or matte board now. It's PERMANENT!

