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Marquetry Workshops Series

Workshop 3: Mounting a Picture

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Table of Contents

Table of Figures

1. **Introduction**

1.1. Mounting a picture can be a bit daunting but follow a few simple 'rules' and difficulties should be few.

1.2. This Workshop will cover the selection and preparation of the groundwork (baseboard), adhesives and the laying process (sticking down) of veneers.

2. The Groundwork

2.1. The groundwork is the board onto which your masterpiece is mounted, also referred to as the baseboard.

2.2. Various materials may be used for the groundwork (baseboard). These include:

- Chipboard,
- Blockboard,
- Plywood,
- Solid wood
- Medium Density Fibre board (MDF).

2.3. Each of the groundwork materials has its merits and drawbacks.

- Chipboard is prone to crumble especially at the edges.
- Blockboard can be quite heavy.
- Plywood comes in many thicknesses but more challenging to work the edges in particular.
- Solid wood can be heavy and prone to warping and shrinkage.
- MDF is a resin composite that is easy to work and comes in many different thicknesses but if not stored properly, e.g. flat, may obtain a curvature or set.

2.4. If strength is needed plywood may be a good choice but for general marquetry work MDF is a very good all-rounder.

3. **Preparation**

3.1. Cutting the Board

3.1.1. The groundwork needs to be prepared before the marquetry is applied. It must be shaped to suit and generally all sides vertical and, for a rectangular piece, all corners exactly square.

3.1.2. To check that the corners are square measure the length of the opposite sides. These must be *exactly* the same length *and* the length of the diagonals must also be equal. If not the final result wil look skewed.

3.1.3. In addition you may use a try square (an 'L' shaped tool carpenter's use) or use one of those triangular templates that form part of a geometry set.

3.1.4. Alternatively, some DIY stores offer a cutting service if you buy the board from them. For most marquetry sized pieces an off-cut can usually be found.

3.2. Surface Preparation

3.2.1. Most materials will require a light sanding with a coarse paper (Say 180 grit) to remove any smoothness acquired during manufacture and to provide a key for the adhesive. This should be done on both faces and each of the sides.

3.3. Veneer Preparation

3.3.1. It is paramount that the veneer side to be stuck down is clean from excess glue, tape, residues, dust or loose pieces.

3.3.2. The veneer must also be dry and dust free.

3.3.3. The face of the veneer is best cleaned up after laying to avoid potential damage.

4. Adhesives

The types of glue available are numerous ranging from the very traditional animal glues to two part, high strength, resin glues. In this workshop we will consider three types: PVA, contact adhesive and resin glues.

4.1. PVA

4.1.1. Polyvinyl Acetate (PVA) or white wood glue is a good all-rounder. It dries fairly clear, allows some adjustment for a short while and may be reactivated by medium heat to either re-stick a troublesome spot or allow careful removal should problems occur.

4.2. Contact adhesives

4.2.1. Evostik or Thixofix are two common contact adhesives which bond on contact. This property allows the piece to be worked on very soon after laying.

4.2.2. Some (such as Thixofix) allow the piece to be moved a little after initial contact until a greater pressure is applied. This can be helpful at times.

4.2.3. Particularly useful for laying sides and borders.

4.2.4. Can be very smelly! Use only in a well-ventilated area.

4.3. Resin Glues

4.3.1. A typical glue in this category is Cascamite. It is waterproof, dries clear and has good gap filling capability.

4.3.2. Cascamite has a relatively short shelf life (approximately 6 months before mixing) after which the glue loses its strength.

4.3.3. Another type of modern polymer glue popular with woodworkers is Titebond. I have no experience of this but may be worth looking into.

5. Laying process

5.1. The general process of laying is the same whichever type of glue is used.

Important: ALWAYS FOLLOW THE ADVESIVE MANUFACTURER'S INSTRUCTIONS FOR BEST RESULTS.

5.1.1. Start by marking out on the board in pencil the exact position of your work on the baseboard. Check this carefully. See Figure 5-1 below.

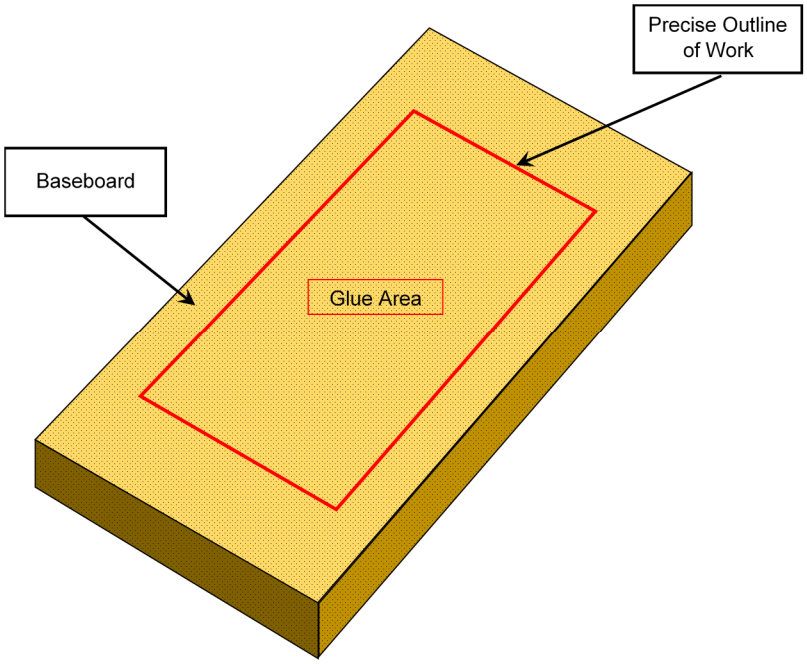

Figure 5-1: Marking the Work Position on the Baseboard

5.1.2. Your work may be cut exactly to size before laying or it may be trimmed after laying.

5.1.2.1. Extra care must be taken if the work is already cut to size to get the position just right.

5.1.2.2. If the work is oversize, it can be readily trimmed to size after laying if using PVA or a contact adhesive. Other types of adhesive may make it more difficult to trim once laid and the glue set.

5.2. Protection

5.2.1. To protect your work during the laying process, it may be prudent to cover the face with tape (or paper taped in place). This will prevent any unwanted glue or sticky fingers from contaminating your masterpiece.

5.2.2. Place tape on the baseboard just outside the marks defining the picture placement. This will help to prevent excess glue causing problems when trimming or cleaning up for border applications. See Figure 5-2 for an illustration.

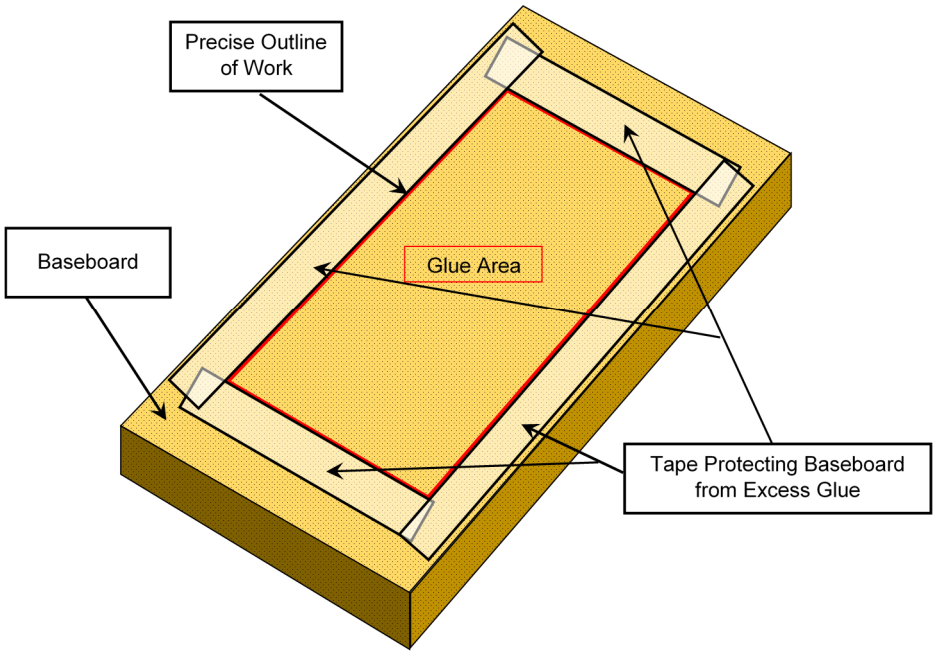

Figure 5-2: Taping the Baseboard

5.3. Whichever type of glue is used, place the work in its correct position as indicated by the positional marks made earlier. Tape one edge to the baseboard to form a hinge. This should keep the work in the correct position once glued. See Figure 5-3 below.

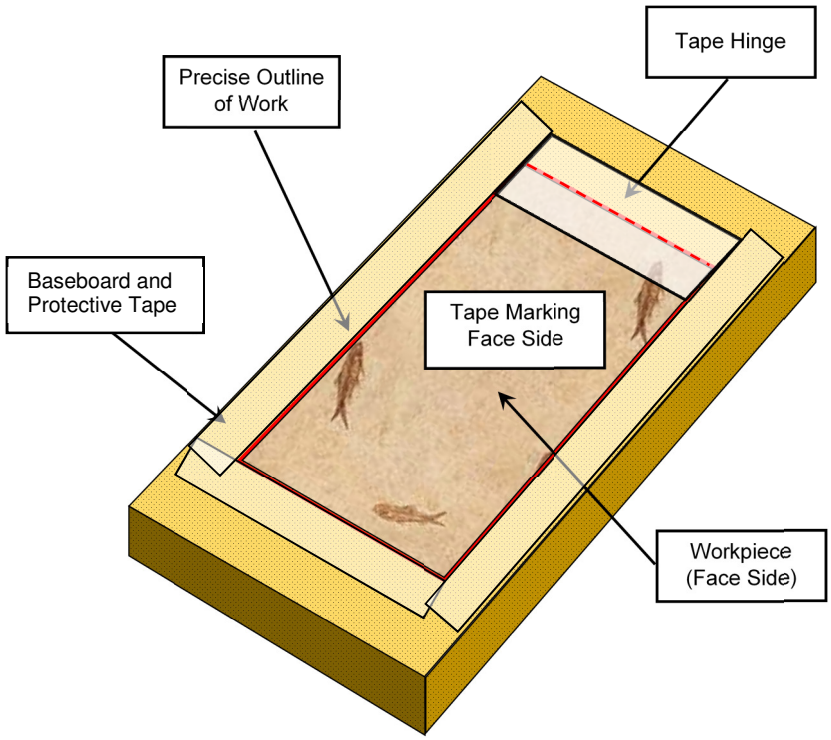

Figure 5-3: Applying a Tape Hinge

5.3.1. Apply glue to the reverse of the work and/or the baseboard in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

5.3.2. Remove the protective tape from the baseboard leaving clean edges to the glued area.

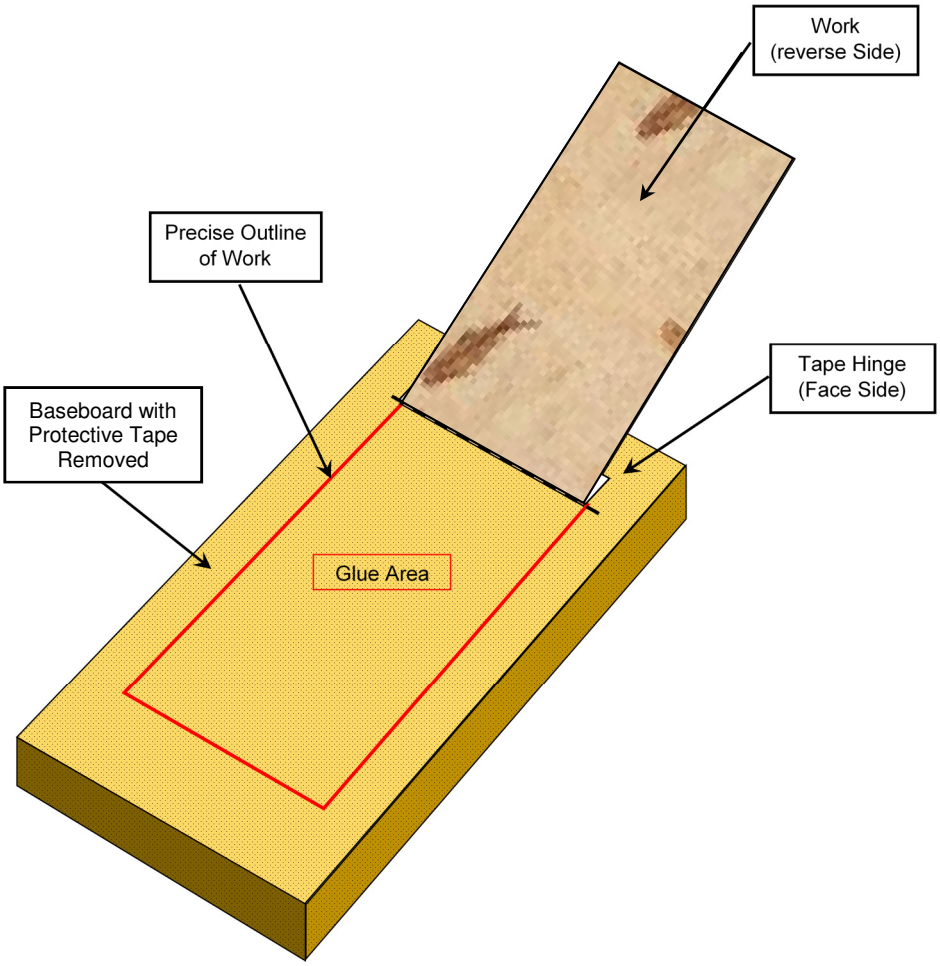

Figure 5-4: Preparation of Assembly for Glue Application

5.3.3. Carefully place the work on the board by hinging back. After checking the alignment, lightly smooth out from the hinge end to ensure that there are no air bubbles. See Figure 5-5 below

5.3.4. When using a contact glue, it is sometimes helpful to place a piece of non-stick paper over the glued area before hinging back the workpiece to prevent premature sticking. Gradually withdraw the paper as the veneer is lowered down and smoothed out.

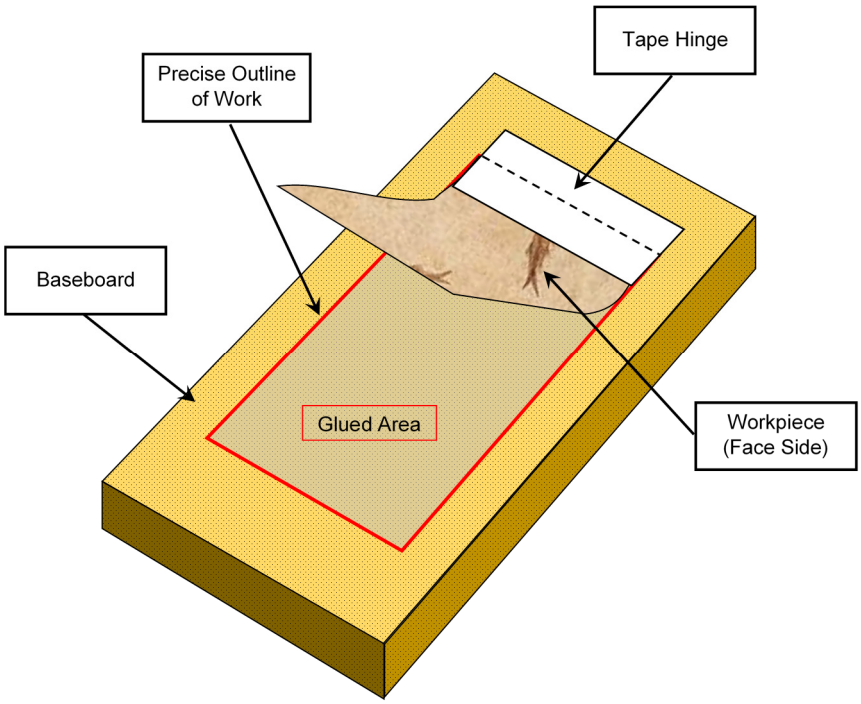

Figure 5-5: Laying the Workpiece

5.4. The piece can then be pressed with a wallpaper roller prior to being placed in a press. If no press is available, then heavy weights, books, sand bags, flower press, etc. may be used to apply pressure.

5.5. After the appropriate cure time the workpiece can be removed from the press.

Note: If the picture has to be trimmed after laying, try to do this before the glue has fully cured. For contact adhesives this is immediately after laying and for PVA after about 5 or 10 minutes (i.e. when the glue has set and the work won't move).

6. Cleaning up

6.1. Remove any protective tape and excess glue from the board.

6.2. Clean up the board and edges ready for the application of the borders. See Workshop 2: Borders and Edges to assist in the preparation and application of edges and borders.