



pushing the envelope

| FAUX POSTAGE |



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getting started with faux postage/artistamps can be a challenge, simply because as a newer art form it is not as well documented. Somebody interested in oil painting or sculpture starts by buying a kit, taking a class, or getting a book from the library. These options rarely exist for faux postage, which can be as simple as sketching or as complex as high-end mixed-media art.

At one extreme, you need very little to make your first artistamp: paper, a pencil or pen, glue, Post-It® Notes for masking, and the one specialty item you probably can't do without if you take this approach, Fiskars® Paper Edgers Stamp scissors. They will give the stamp a perforated edge like the real thing. These things, and some inspiration, may be all you ever need—assuming you never catch the faux postage bug.

For those of you who can't resist knowing all, I'm going to approach this very large topic in chunks. In this column we're dealing with basic materials, some of which are not easy to find. In future columns I'll be looking at traditional and computer-aided methods.

Before talking about paper, it's important to note the biggest challenge in faux postage: perforation. Most of us would like our postage to actually look like stamps, which have those lovely regular edges. It's not as easy to achieve as you might think. Your choices (all of which are addressed below in more detail), are:

- paper that is already perforated;
- Fiskars® Paper Edgers Stamp scissors mentioned above (the scale of which will not always suit the project at hand);
- a sewing machine with a large bore needle;
- hand perforating with a punch tool;
- investing in an antique Rosback perforator;
- sending your faux postage out to be perforated by somebody who owns a Rosback perforator.

If you're unsure about faux postage and would like to avoid the perforation issue from the start, you might try purchasing materials developed especially for artistampers. For example, 100 Proof Press sells pre-perforated sheets of postage paper in a

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variety of sizes and shapes as well as coordinating laser-cut plastic templates for masking. This approach to faux postage is useful for those who are interested in creating whole sheets of stamps as single, stand-alone art pieces.

The primary restriction with these and other pre-perforated sheets is that you must work within the dimensions provided and you must work directly, by hand. (In another column I'll talk about working large and reducing images mechanically to postage-stamp size.) Computer, printer, or photocopier-based design or manipulation is not usually possible with these papers. Further, some brands of perforated faux postage paper are not pre-gummed, a subject of much debate among the artistamp crowd, and there is usually only one grade and color of paper available.

For those who are willing to look into other ways of perforating their artistamps, there are outlets for pre-gummed paper. Most prominent is The Olathe Post, where Bill Porter—an enthusiastic artistamper himself—provides a wide variety of supplies, including dry-gummed stamp stock in

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matte or glossy finish and a variety of colors. The Olathe Post also sells a Faux Postage Paper Template Kit that includes Mylar templates, but more than that, Bill owns an original, 1916 vintage Rosback pinhole perforator and he will custom perforate finished faux postage sheets.

The type of paper you choose to use, whether it is pre-gummed and perforated or not, should depend to some degree on what medium you use to do the art work itself. The most common approaches are:

- working with rubber stamps;
- reducing larger-format art work mechanically;
- computer-based design.

Because some people feel quite strongly that artistamps must be produced in a series, this last option is quite prevalent. Actual painting with oil, watercolor, or acrylic paint on a stamp-sized surface is seen less often. The best known examples are from the early '60s, when artists like Joel Smith and Donald Evans sometimes painted directly onto existing stamps (see http://jas.faximum.com/asg/room_1/asg1_cat.htm for a selection of historical artistamps).

Rubber stamps—self-carved or commercial—are commonly used by those who work with pre-perforated stock. Colored pencils, pastels, and watercolor markers are often used to accent rubber stamped images. This paper tends to be fairly thin, so any medium that is especially wet will not do well.

Those who design on the computer or manipulate original art or photography often print out their faux postage using a color printer (laser or inkjet). In this case, the perforation issue must be resolved, but the artist does

have a wider choice of paper types to choose from.

In the next issue of CLOTH PAPER SCISSORS™, I'll be looking more closely at the use of rubber stamps to create faux postage. In subsequent issues we'll explore more technologically advanced approaches.



In the meantime, CLOTH PAPER SCISSORS™ would like to invite you to share your work with us and other readers. We're looking for samples of faux postage and mail art to include in future articles. If you have something to share, please send it to:

Cloth Paper Scissors
Attn: Mail Art
P. O. Box 685
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by rosina lippi