OVERVIEW

A spot matte varnish is used to achieve a unique effect on the final printed piece and add a new dimension to your product. Its use is generally aesthetic and can be utilized to highlight a certain graphic element such as text or images. It can also "flood" the page coating it entirely as to produce a softer finish while maintaining the brilliant color profile of a coated stock. In many ways, a spot varnish is very much like adding a spot color to your design, except that it adds a finishing effect instead of actual color. It also requires the output of a fifth lithographic plate just as a spot color would.
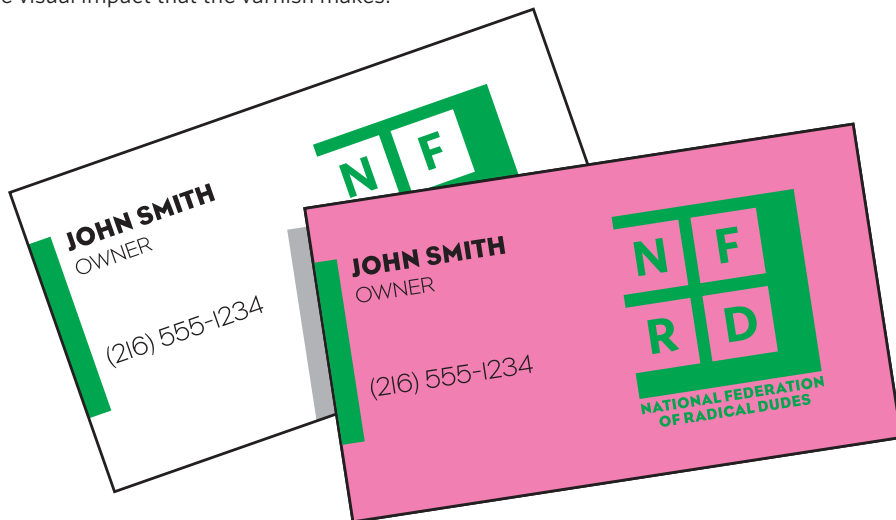
The applied varnish is completely transparent and overprints on top of all other inks, which can be done without any shift in color. You will see the most dramatic results by applying this varnish to a coated gloss stock. The contrast between the matte and gloss areas will be quite apparent, therefore intensifying the visual impact that the varnish makes.

When building a file with a matte varnish, you will need to pick a place-holder color. Because the varnish itself is transparent, there is no way to depict the varnish on your computer monitor. This is why we need a place-holder. It is recommended to make the place-holder color stand out from the rest of your document. For example, if you have designed a business card that has a primarily green color palette, a good choice for your matte varnish place-holder would be solid magenta. Generally, bright and bold colors work the best. This way, there is no confusion as to where the varnish will go.

Finally, remember that the varnish goes onto the area to be *matte*, not glossy. This mistake is made quite often because of the general familiarity with spot UV coating or gloss varnish. Matte varnish will produce a similar result, but must applied in opposite fashion from these other gloss treatments.

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A standard business card layout. No varnish has been applied.

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The same layout with a spot matte varnish applied. Magenta was used as the place-holder color. In this instance, the entire white of the card will appear matte on the final product, while all graphics and text will appear glossy.
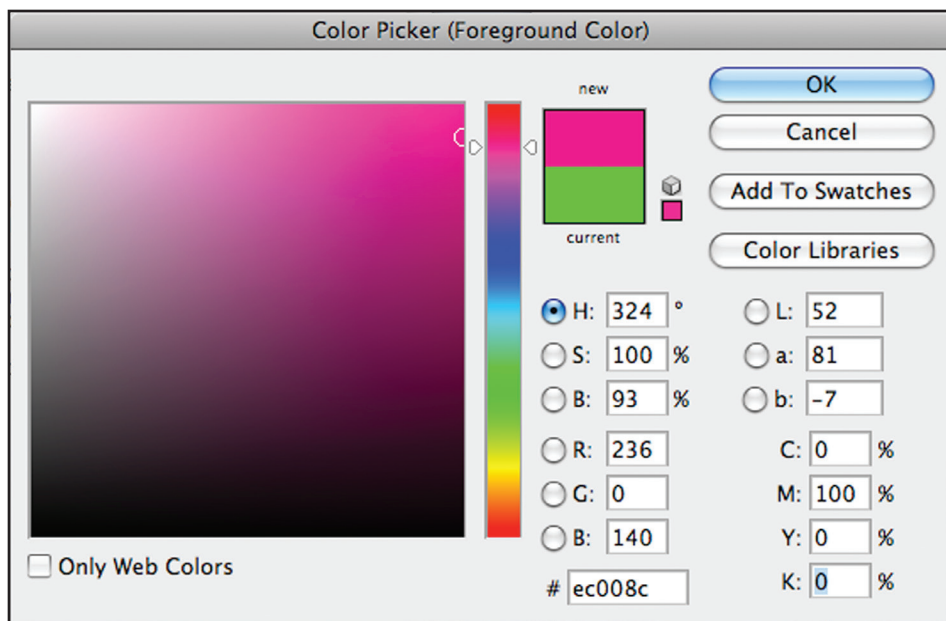
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SETUP

Now that you understand what the varnish does and how it is used, we can go over the steps needed to add one to your files. You will first need to establish separate layers for both your artwork and your varnish. Do this in the layers palette. You can also name these layers accordingly to avoid any confusion. This is not necessary to do before you begin designing your project because you can add and adjust layers at any time. The next step will be to choose a color that will represent the varnish.

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Tool bar showing green as the active color. Select the active color to enter the Color Picker.

To select a color, open your Color Picker window. You can do this by simply clicking on the active color swatch on the Tool Bar. Choose a color that will stand out from the rest of your project. In this case, we have chosen to use solid magenta. This will be the color in which the spot varnish is depicted on the computer monitor. Remember, this color will be swapped out with the clear varnish when your files are printed. You can also create a new swatch of this color by accessing the Swatch palette sub-menu and selecting New Swatch.

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The Color Picker. Colors can be selected using either the color field or by entering numeric color values.

Color Picker (Foreground Color)

new

OK
Cancel
Add To Swatches
Color Libraries

current

H: 324 °
S: 100 %
B: 93 %
R: 236
G: 0
B: 140

L: 52
a: 81
b: -7
C: 0 %
M: 100 %
Y: 0 %
K: 0 %

☐ Only Web Colors

ec008c

SPOT VARNISH SETUP IN ADOBE PHOTOSHOP

ADDING VARNISH

Once you have created your varnish layer and chosen your place-holder color, you can then add the varnish to your project. The way you implement the varnish depends on what areas you want to appear glossy and which you want to appear matte. You will notice the best results if objects that are meant to stand out are kept glossy while the negative space is applied with varnish. This will allow the graphics to "pop" off the page and subdue the areas which are less important. A very simple way to achieve this effect is by flooding the entire varnish layer with the placeholder color.
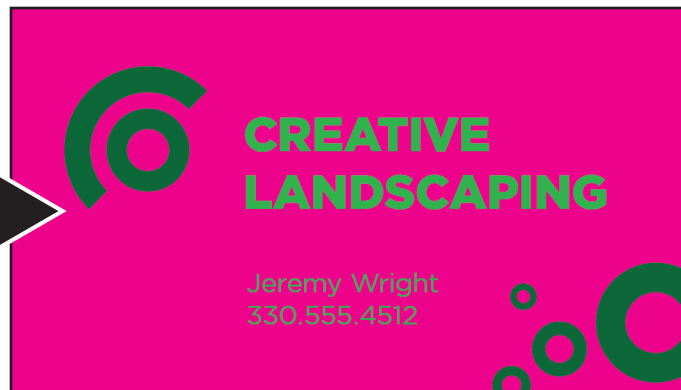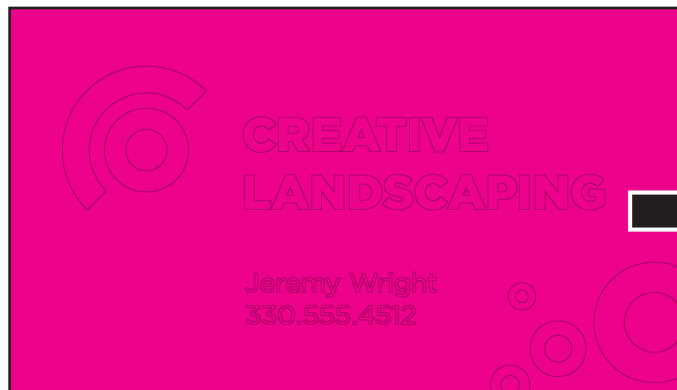
You will notice that doing this covers up all of your artwork, but you can remove varnish coverage on all graphic elements by rearranging your layers. You can place your varnish layer behind the artwork layer by clicking and dragging it to the desired location on the Layers palette. This layer order will keep the artwork uncovered while having the varnish on the white of the paper. If each of your elements is on a separate layer, you can arrange them so that some are placed below the varnish and some are placed above it.

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*This is the original artwork for the card with no varnish added.*

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All artwork is covered by the varnish layer. Bringing this layer below the artwork will expose the artwork and remove application of the varnish.

CREATIVE LANDSCAPING

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(Artwork outline added to show placement under varnish)

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ADDING VARNISH, CONT.

In order for your varnish to print correctly, you MUST keep your file separated into layers. By flattening your project, you will remove all data that may be placed behind your varnish layer and we will be unable to take the final steps to ensure that the files are printed with a varnish. Keeping the file in layers allows us to convert the varnish layer into a spot channel and print it as varnish rather than a process ink. If we were to print a flattened file without taking these last few steps, the varnish place-holder you have chosen would be converted into color data and print as it appears on screen.
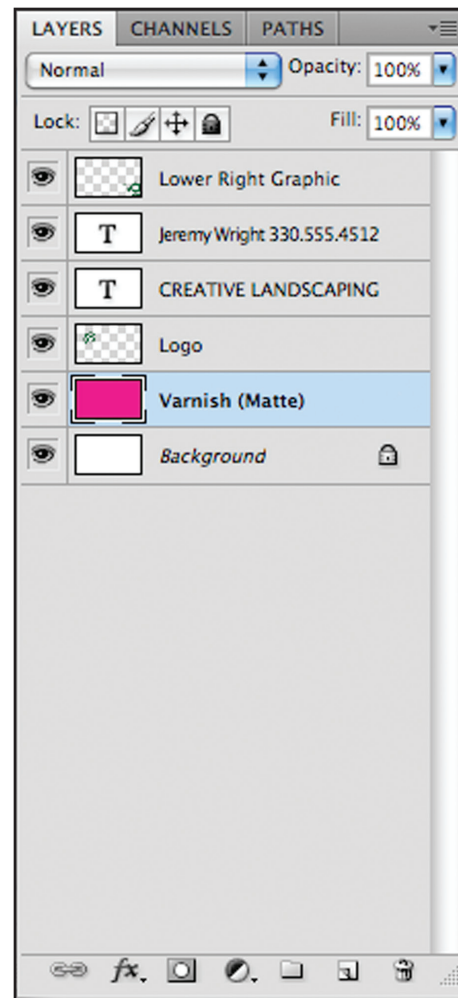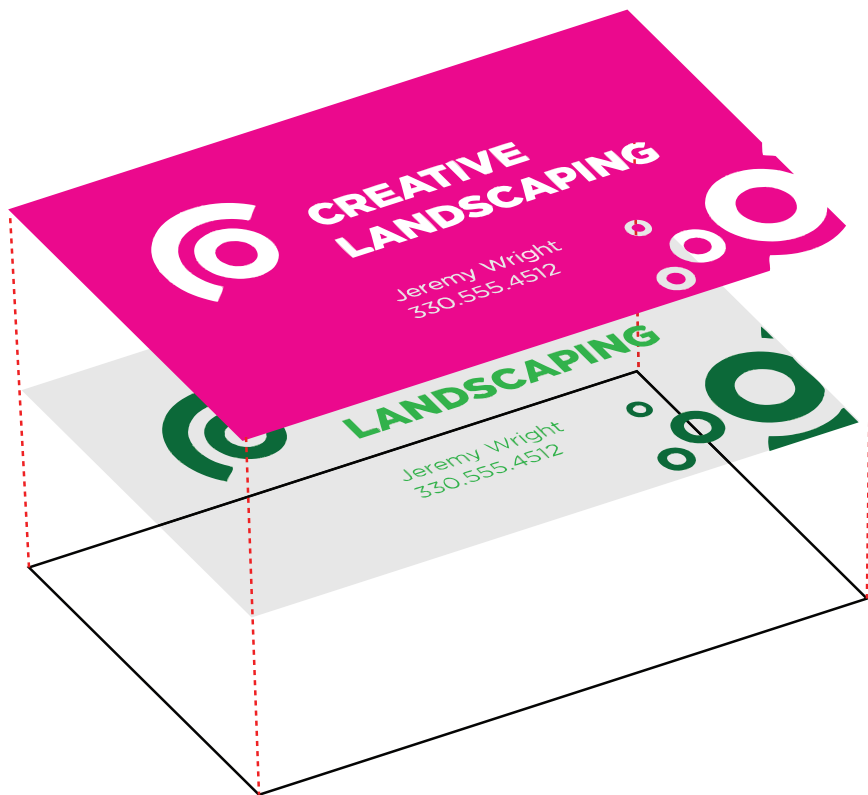
The layer palette shows the layers used in this project. Notice the varnish placement.

The artwork is printed first, with the varnish going on top.

SAVING & ORDERING

Once you are happy with the placement of the matte varnish, you can save out your file(s). Choose one of three file formats - EPS, PDF, or PSD. Whichever format you may choose, it is absolutely necessary to keep your file in editable layers. Make sure that your files are saved with a full 1/8" bleed. This is done by adding 1/8" to each side of the document and extending the artwork to the edge of the canvas. Finally, your file should be at least 300 dpi to provide adequate printing quality.

From here you can place your order and upload your files. When entering the product information, it is important to choose 5/0 or 5/5 ink option to let us know there will be a 5th spot plate in your project. In the Spot Ink field, enter "Spot Matte Varnish" so we know that is what you would like included. It's also recommended that you request a digital proof that can be sent to you for your approval. This ensures that the varnish is placed exactly as you intended.

▲ *Jakprints order form set to order a one-sided business card with a 5th spot ink—in this case, the spot matte varnish.*