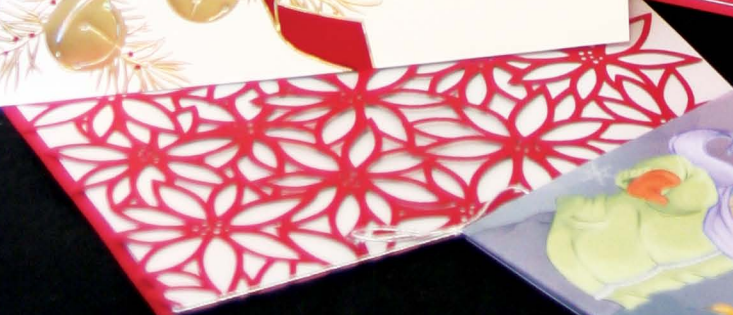
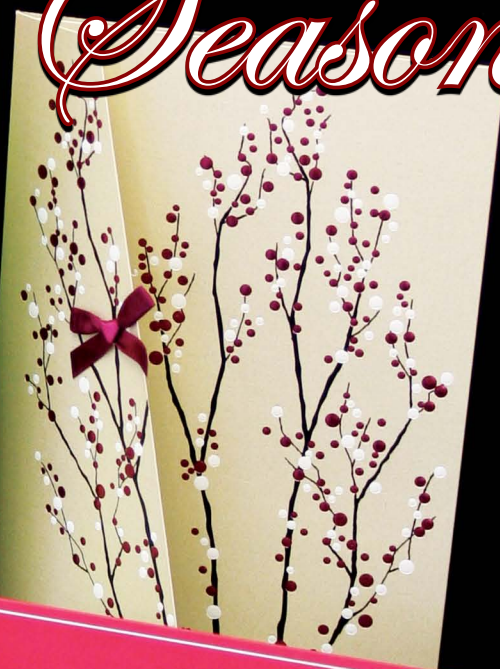
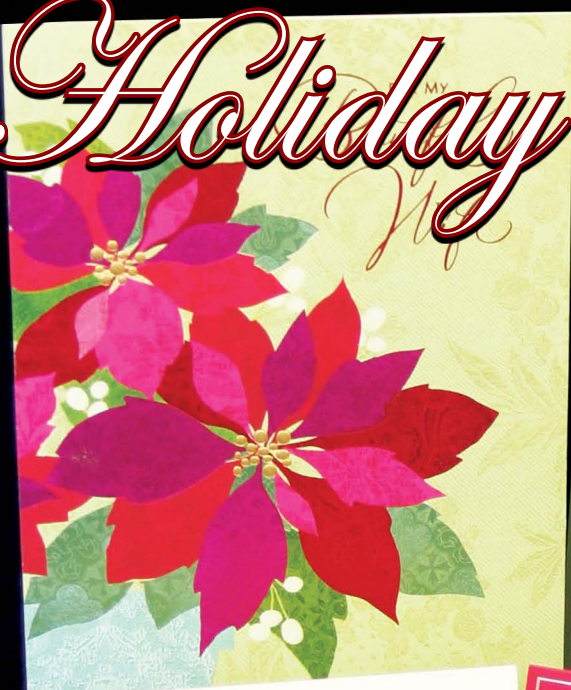


# Embellishing the Holiday Season

By Kym Conis



In a recent report on Christmas card trends released by the Greeting Card Association (GCA), Christmas remains the number one card-sending holiday in the US, with approximately 1.5 billion cards expected to be purchased this year. That figure, which includes boxed and packaged cards, while down slightly from 2010, still reflects the strength of the Christmas card category and the importance of this tradition among American consumers.

According to American Greetings, consumers want Christmas cards with warm, conversational messages that capture the spirit of the season and reflect their personalities and the relationships they are looking to celebrate. They also want to share the latest innovations as a way of enhancing the special feel that their recipient will receive upon experiencing the card they have carefully picked out.

Furthermore, “Research has shown that holiday cards are often given in lieu of gifts by the sender and are saved as keepsakes by the recipient. Therefore, card purchases for the holidays are often driven by the mindset of nurturing a meaningful relationship with the recipient, creating a willingness to spend more on elaborately embellished greeting cards,” stated Rich Lund, Fine Impressions sales manager.

As a result, consumers can expect Christmas cards with embellishments such as lights, sound, pop-ups, laser cutting, foil stamping, embossing, diecutting, etc., to be among the top choices of consumers who are looking for value as well as for making their holiday greetings stand apart. The following Christmas cards were all winners in the Foil & Specialty Effects Association 2010 Gold Leaf Awards Competition. They are exquisite examples of how foil stamping, refractive stamping and embossing are being utilized to adorn Christmas cards during the holiday season.

**Bows and Bells**  
**Fine Impressions, North Mankato, MN**

Bows and Bells was produced for the corporate holiday card market. Sending the right holiday card portrays a personal commitment to each and every recipient, helping the company build trusting and lasting relationships. The card was a redesign of an existing holiday card, maintaining a traditional base, but was updated with a contemporary touch through the use of holographic foil.

The card was converted on an FSC-certified matte C1S paper produced by Smart Papers. Each of the three combination stamp passes were performed two-up on a Kluge press utilizing brass dies made by Metal Magic. The first foil pass applied an API Foils dull gold metallic foil. The second pass applied an API Foils red metallic foil and the final pass applied an ITW Foils holographic foil.

The three foil applications were all tightly registered to each other. To ensure that Fine Impressions achieved its



high-quality standard, the design files were all verified for the proper size, trapping and sculpting instructions.

According to Lund, the future of the holiday greeting card industry is bright with the integration of new technologies and innovations. Personalization of holiday cards continues to transform through the inclusion of photos and sentiments. “Baby boomers are now aged 50 and older so the learned behavior and tradition of sending greeting cards will become even more important in their late adulthood,” said Lund. “Younger generations find electronic or hi-tech greeting cards fun and spontaneous and have discovered that social networking creates a culture of relationships building the market for the exchange of cards.” Lund concludes that the biggest challenge facing manufacturers is enhancing cards with special techniques, intricate designs and new technologies in a cost-effective way while offsetting rising postal costs.

*Fine Impressions is a manufacturer serving the graphic arts market. The company provides print, finishing, envelope manufacturing and napkin manufacturing services to organizations that either lack the equipment or capacity to produce their own products. Integrating a commitment to craftsmanship using time-tested paper converting techniques melded with lean, efficient processes, Fine Impressions provides services from creative to production to a complete turnkey finished goods solution.*

**Anheuser-Busch Season’s Greetings**  
**Scarab Printing Arts, St. Charles, MO**

The Anheuser-Busch holiday card was designed to send to upper executives within the company, wholesalers, customers and federal, local and state government officials. The design stage took the longest as it had to pass through several hands for approval. Initially, the artwork had to be reworked to remove some of the detail in the holly to better accommodate the foil stamping/embossing process. Thought also was put into the dies as to whether Scarab would combination stamp



presses at one time to make certain the register was spot-on and to facilitate production time.”

The biggest challenge in producing the card was the combination of fine line, delicate stamping of the snowflakes with the solid silver block in which the Anheuser-Busch logo is housed. Scarab successfully stamped the intricate snowflakes with no fill in while achieving excellent coverage on the solid silver block.

“Much of the work we did editing the files was done to avoid pitfalls, so in the end, the customer would have a happy foil experience,” said Greenwald. “The Anheuser-Busch graphics department who designed the card was very happy with the results, as the card exceeded their expectations.”

*In business since 1976, Scarab Printing Arts is a family business that produces fine color printing, digital color printing, foil stamping, embossing, diecutting and folding/gluing for the Business-to-Business market.*

**For My Beautiful Wife  
Hallmark Cards, Inc., Lawrence, KS**

In the same report referenced earlier by the GCA, Hallmark Cards reports that this year’s Christmas card imagery will revolve around four different themes:

- A Winter Garden – Soft, reflective illustration or photography inform this trend, while the use of real materials enhances its richness. Whites contrast with rich, deep greens and the occasional flash of cardinal or berry.
- Candlelight and Pine – Surfaces, materials and textures play an important role in this stylistic direction, especially when they tell a story of contrast. For color, the lush greens of nature complement an amber flicker of light.

the three foil passes or stamp and register emboss. Due to extremely tight registration, it was decided to go the route of combination stamping/embossing.

The card was printed on a 5C Heidelberg GTO, one-up, in a work and back format on 100# Cougar smooth white cover. The first pass of printing on the inside of the card included 4C process plus PMS 877 silver (the silver ink prints the A and Eagle logo and the name titles under the signatures). The second pass of litho on the front of the card included 4C process plus spot gloss varnish. According to Scarab Printing Arts President Greg Greenwald, “The varnish was solely for the protection of the red ink on the front to prevent cutter and folding offset and to assist in the foil stamping process.”

For the foil stamping and embossing work, all three passes were combination stamped and embossed, first with metallic silver, then metallic green followed by metallic red. All foil was supplied by Infinity Foils and combination dies by Metal Magic. “We foil stamped/embossed the card on a Kluge EHE and a Kluge EHD,” said Greenwald. “We set up and ran two

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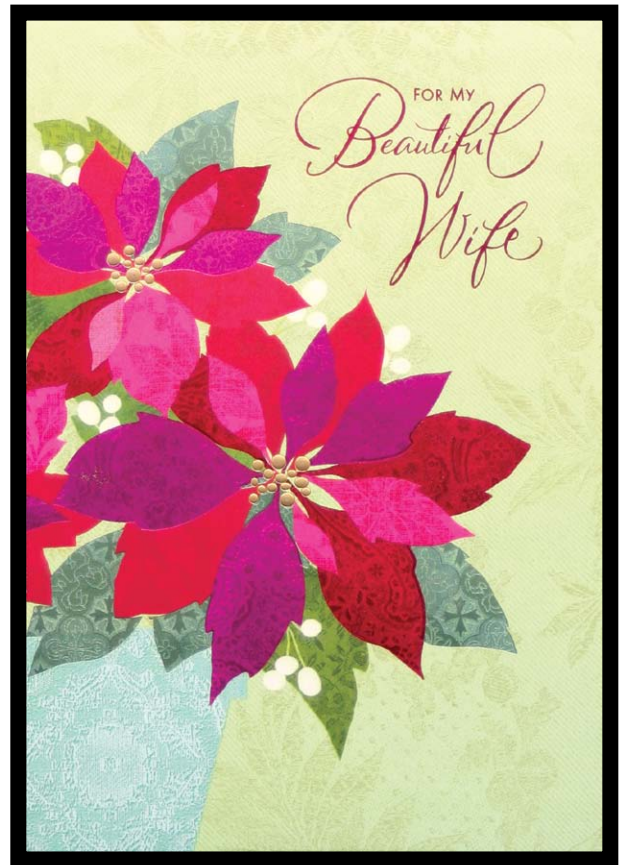
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- All is Calm, All is White – White is the basis for this holiday trend; soft-focus photography, realistic illustration and tone-on-tone patterns further enhance its delicacy and lightness. Real materials, lustrous finishes and beautifully crafted materials warm the frosty white.

- Retro Magic – Nostalgic materials and processes are updated through unexpected or quirky combinations. Frisky color palettes are a key element, but Christmas red, green and white are never out of sight. Very optimistic, this theme fuses a 21st-century aesthetic with the 20th-century utopian point of view.

My Beautiful Wife, designed for the 2011 retail market, is a mixture of several of the above themes. Rich red and green foil stamped poinsettia petals and leaves pop off the page with movement – an effect created by the refractive tapestry-like patterns etched in the foil. In contrast, the berries, stamped in a satin gold and embossed, stand out against the shimmer of light and color that surround them.

As with all Hallmark Card products, collaboration between the designer, art director, editorial director, technical planner, engraver and sometimes manufacturer transpired before production could begin. The three-panel cards ran one-up on a 40" recycled, uncoated sheet. First, they were printed



  
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in 4C process plus a gold metallic ink. The cards underwent three passes of flat foil stamping: metallic rose (all copy) from API Foils, metallic bright red with a prism texture (poinsettia petals) from API and metallic pale green with a prism pattern (poinsettia leaves) from API. The berries were combination stamped/embossed in Egyptian gold from Kurz Transfer Products. All foil stamping dies were produced in-house. Next the card was diecut and the front panel folded and glued so the embossing on the inside left panel of the card did not compromise the integrity of the design on the front by showing through. All copy on the cover and inside the card was foil stamped.

The most challenging production aspect of the job was to maintain the critical registration between foils and the printed design. Additionally, manufacturing had to ensure that the small font did not fill in during the foil stamping process.

*Hallmark Cards provides all types of seasonal and everyday greeting cards, boxed cards, gift cards and Keepsake Ornaments. Hallmark also provides a variety of stationery-related gift items such as instant scrapbooks, recordable memory albums, photo albums and more. Hallmark also has the Hallmark Channel and Hallmark Hall of Fame. ■*