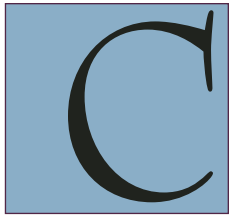


Double-Sided Shadowbox for Hand-Painted Bottles

by James Miller, MCPPE, GCF



Customers never seem to run out of new challenges for us, and that's one reason custom framing is such an interesting occupation, isn't it? Framing a three-dimensional object is expected to be more challenging

than ordinary two-dimensional art, but the most exciting projects are those that test the limits of our imagination. So it was with these Chinese bottles, which turned out to be among the most challenging and gratifying projects I've had the pleasure to design and build... so far.

Mr. & Mrs. Customer, who travel extensively, vacationed in China and brought back a matched set of four glass bottles as a keepsake. Each bottle is corked with a translucent rounded cap, and measures about 2½" tall, 1½" wide, and ½" deep. They are beautifully hand-painted in intricate detail—not from the outside, but from the inside.

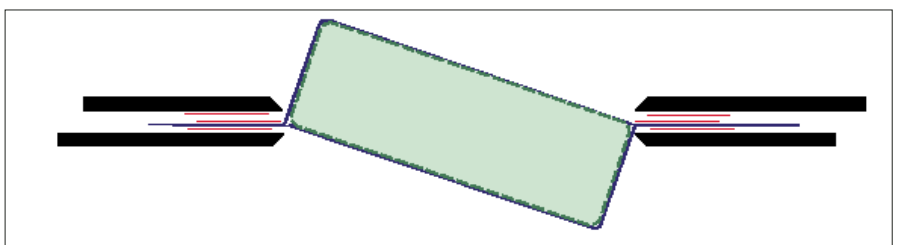
Mr. Customer asked us to design a see-through frame for the whole set, so that both sides of the bottles would be equally visible. He planned to display them on a high windowsill, with natural light shining through the frame from behind. These bottles are collectible, so it was important to design a non-invasive method of mounting, which would be completely reversible. That is, no changes to the bottles would be acceptable; no adhesive of any kind could touch them. And from the aesthetic viewpoint, any sort of mechanical mounting devices would be easily visible, and would detract from the bottles' smooth lines and delicately painted designs. Finally, the framed result had to be sturdy enough for withstand some handling and transport. How could we design an attractive frame to hold the four bottles firmly in posi-



Photo 1: This shadowbox was created to allow the viewer to see through the bottles. Creating a solid mounting for the bottles was a primary concern.



Photo 2: The bottles were enhanced with black, moiré silk matting.



Shown here is an enlarged view of how each bottle was wrapped for support. Each was wrapped in two pieces of folded clear film (indicated by blue lines), which are joined together by strips of double-sided tape (indicated by red lines), between two mats (black lines) with mirror-image openings. Double-sided tape also secures the clear film mounts to both mats.



Photo 3: The side to face toward the outside in the window was padded with foamboard.



Photo 4: That backside was given a black core mat around the edges to serve as a dustcover.



Photo 5: Mounting with clear film gave the flexibility to set the bottles at an angle.

tion, without harm, and with no visible means of support? That was a fun challenge.

For the design we chose a cherry-finished, 2" deep shadowbox moulding with a pleasant, but not too busy, profile. Inside, the bottles are nestled in the openings of black moiré silk mats placed back-to-back (see Photo 2). The mat assembly, which also contains the mounted bottles, is sandwiched in the center of the frame's depth between two sets

of shadowbox sides.

Because the light through a window would radiate through the back of the frame, we used UV-filtering glass on both sides, to reduce fading potential. The back glass (the side that would face toward the outside in the window) was padded with strips of $\frac{1}{8}$ " foamboard and retained by Fletcher's Flexible Multipoints (see Photo 3). Then the back was finished with a $1\frac{1}{2}$ " wide, black-core black mat,

glued to the frame just as a dust-cover would be (see Photo 4). 3M BumpOns were placed on the frame as non-slip feet for sitting on the windowsill. In case they decide to hang the frame later, we installed a hanging system that didn't interfere with the see-through feature. The frame design allowed positioning each bottle at an angle, which enhances the three-dimensional visibility, and makes interesting reflections when

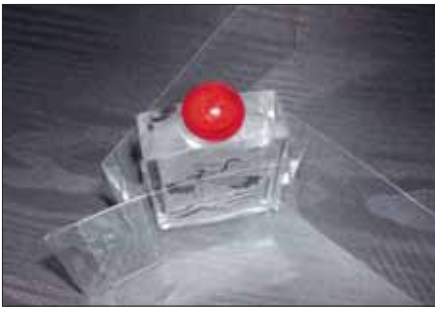


Photo 6: Surrounding the bottle with two pieces of clear film to create a mount.



Photo 7: The bottle, wrapped in clear film, were then joined with double-sided tape.



Photo 8: Close-up of mounted bottles.

light shines through them (see Photo 5).

Mounting was the tricky part of this project, of course. I used clear polyester film to hold the bottles in their mat openings (see Photo 6). Each bottle was wrapped in two pieces of the clear film, which were folded to conform to the bottle's shape. The two pieces of clear film were then joined together by strips of double-sided tape (see Photo 7 and diagram on

page 42).

Double-sided tape also secured each mounted bottle within its opening, between the two mats. The height and width of the mat openings were carefully calculated, to keep the bottles from moving vertically, and to hide the clear film where it extends from the side edges of the bottles (see Photo 8).

The customers were thrilled with the finished project, and so was I. It required about two-and-a-

half hours of direct labor, with a retail price of \$194.00. This was the kind of framing job that makes the day's work worthwhile—unique, fun, and profitable. ■

James Miller, MCPPE, GCF, founded his retail business, ARTFRAME, Inc., in 1988, and has focused on preservation framing of art and objects as both a student and educator. He is an instructor at the National Conference.

