

When Not To Make It Clear

by Anne Vazquez

Of all the dangers posed to artwork, light is one of the most damaging. Extended exposure to light can result in fading, color changes, chemical alterations, and cellulose degradation in paper. It is true that extreme temperatures and humidity can also be hazardous to artwork, but light is more of a concern since it is virtually everywhere.

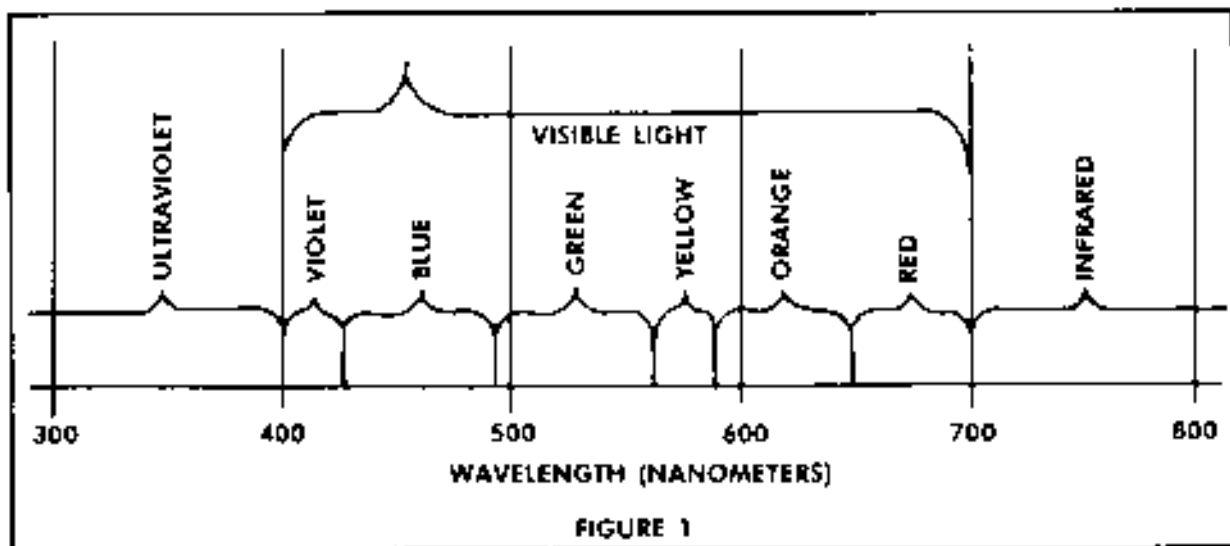
The irony is that light is the very thing that enhances artwork on display. While museums display artwork under carefully monitored lighting conditions, that is usually not the case in a home or office. The reality of everyday life means that artwork is vulnerable to the effects of long-term exposure to light.

As a result, it has become increasingly necessary for framers to not only create an attractive design, but to also to protect the contents being framed. These days, with the rise of high-end framing, framing sentimental art and objects, and preservation framing, the emphasis on protecting artwork for the future has grown. As a professional in the framing industry, it's important that you be able to help your customer choose a framing package that best fits their needs. And you can also make a profit at the same time.

On the color spectrum, UV light, which is invisible

to the naked eye, is the product of light wavelengths that are between 300-400 nanometers (see Figure 1). Ultraviolet (UV) light is especially damaging because it has shorter wavelengths, which have higher frequencies, and produce higher energy levels. This energy sparks chemical reactions in the framing materials—namely degradation. To properly frame artwork, framers must take this potential damage into consideration and design the framing package accordingly. This is where the glazing used becomes very important.

While the ability of UV-filtering glass to protect artwork is much better than in the past, it does not mean that it will not suffer light damage. It is important to tell your customers that while UV-filtering glass prevents a great deal of UV light from reaching the artwork, it is important to minimize exposure to direct sunlight. (For types of glazing currently offered in the industry, see the "Guide to Glazing Products," in this issue on page 40.) For instance, draperies and window treatments should be closed whenever possible. In terms of artificial light, inform your customers that incandescent lighting emits lower levels of UV than fluorescent lighting. Remember, all types of light are damaging to artwork.



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Selling the Glass

With more consumers recognizing the importance of preservation elements in their framing package, the use of UV-blocking glass has risen significantly over the past several years. In 1997, 19% of the respondents in the Sandel/*Picture Framing Magazine* Glazing Survey reported that they had difficulty convincing their customers of the benefits of UV-blocking glazing. Only 5% of the framers that responded indicated this was a problem in the 1999 survey.

Apparently, a heightened general awareness of UV light and its effects has enabled framers to sell more UV-filtering glass. William Barker, Vice President of Sales and Marketing at Denglas Technologies in Moorestown, New Jersey, attributes much of this awareness to the concern with UV light as a whole (Sandel Glass and Denglas have formed a strategic alliance to offer Preservation denglas, a UV-filtering and anti-reflective glass.) For instance, the market presence of products such as suntan lotion with sunblock and UV-filtering sunglasses has significantly increased in recent years.

In commenting on consumer attitudes towards UV-filtering glass, Phil Hodgdon, Sales Director at Zuel Co. in St. Paul, Minnesota, also says that he has seen an increase in consumer awareness. He observes that this awareness has fueled the consumer's desire to protect their artwork in the framing process.

Rob Mask, owner of a Great Frame Up location in Minnetonka, Minnesota, says that he finds that more and more people are willing to pay the extra money for a quality job. "We view ourselves as consultants, who are there to help the customer protect their art. As a result, they are usually very receptive to our suggestions."

Mask says that, nine times out of 10, they start by suggesting UV-filtering clear glass. "From that point," says Mask, "we move up or down the scale." He approximates that they use some type of UV-filtering glass in 90% of the jobs in his shop. Of that, 75% is UV-filtering clear, 5% is UV-filtering non-glare, and another 5% is UV-filtering anti-reflective.

"The customer usually decides that the UV-filtering glass is best for their package. However, sometimes they

opt for regular glass if they decide the piece is not something that warrants the UV protection." He adds, "This could be the case if the art is only going to be displayed for a short period of time."

At the other end of the spectrum is artwork that, due to monetary or even sentimental value, should only be displayed under glass of the highest quality. UV-filtering anti-reflective glass has been touted as the best type of glazing this kind of artwork. While offering a high level of protection from damaging light, this glass (often called "museum glass") also maximizes its appearance when on display.

Mask says, "We suggest the UV-filtering anti-reflective glass for the finer art, such as serigraphs, that our customers bring into the shop."

Many framers find that customers are looking at their framed art as an investment and are therefore willing to pay the additional cost for UV-filtering glass. Rob Markoff, owner of Gallery Services and Artrageous! which are located in San Diego, California says, "Customers realize that their art will look better and last longer. That makes the additional cost worth it to most people." Markoff has found that, with the right pricing strategy, selling UV-filtering glass can be a "win-win" situation.

He cites the "Pricing for Profits" system introduced by Tru Vue, Inc. "If the framer positions the price at a certain point, the customer benefits from a better framing package, while at the same time, the framer is able to increase their profits. By designating a slightly lower markup than suggested by most sources, you can sell more of the glass. Over time, the increased number of framing packages with UV-blocking glass adds to your profits."

For the most part, this means the price of each sale will increase by as little as seven to 10 dollars. Furthermore, the fact that it "costs" the same to cut and handle UV-filtering glass as it does for regular glass adds to the profit increases.

Patti Dumbaugh, Marketing Manager at Tru Vue, says, "The response to 'Pricing for Profits' has been fantastic. The program is a simple tool that has been a real eye-opener for framers."

In order to sell a product, you should be knowledgeable about it. With this in mind, your glass company can provide you with a wealth of information about their product. Barker, at Denglas, says, “We in the glazing industry can help the framer in becoming familiar with the different types of glass available. We do this through marketing materials, as well as educational materials.”

Should It Be Your Only Glass?

So back to a question that’s been buzzing in the framing industry. Is it a good idea to make UV-filtering glass the standard in your shop? Yes, it’s good to be able to offer your customers a value-added service, but you’ll also be adding to your costs by using the more expensive UV-filtering glass.

Recently, Apogee Enterprises in Minneapolis, Minnesota, parent company of Tru Vue, Inc., formed an alliance with Balangier Fine Art & Design, a manufacturer of pre-framed art. Under the agreement, Balangier uses Tru Vue’s UV-filtering clear glass for all framed artwork it sells. Of the decision, Bill Ringier, President of Balangier, says that, “it is an attractive way to add value not currently offered as a standard option by our competition.”

Another company now offering UV-filtering glass as standard appeared in the March issue of *PFM*. In September 1999, Aaron Brothers Art & Framing, a subsidiary of Michael’s Crafts based in Commerce, California decided to use UV-filtering glass for all custom framing customers.

You may think, “Of course these large companies can more easily afford to offer UV-filtering glass as a standard.” However, (at least in the case of Balangier), it is also important to think that if customers can expect this protection in the pre-framed art that they buy, why wouldn’t they come to expect it from their custom framer?

Here is where value-added service versus cost increase comes into play. As mentioned earlier by Rob Markoff, the cost to cut and handle glass is the same, no matter if it’s regular clear, UV-filtering clear, UV-filtering non-glare, or UV-filtering anti-reflective.

As we continue to find out more about preservation framing and how to protect artwork, it is important for framers to offer their customers the best materials available. By educating yourself on the characteristics of each type of UV-filtering glass, you will help your customer make an informed choice that will make them happy with their framing package—and with you! ■