

Profiles ◆ in ◆ Framing

Broadway Gallery

This multi-location framing operation in Alexandria and Fairfax, VA celebrates its 25th year.

by Anne Vazquez

When Barry Broadway took over operation of the family business in 1995, he was taking charge of a framing operation his mother Sue had launched 22 years earlier. It all began when Sue, an artist, began framing her work at home. With some basic tools, including a mitre box, a mat cutter, hammer, glue, and nails, she set to work. Within a short period of time, Sue was framing for an increasing number of local artists and residents. She eventually secured an account to frame the work of Edward Bierly—a well-known wildlife artist.

After five years of framing in her home, client demand led Sue to expand into a retail location. Extra Touch of Class was incorporated and opened in Springfield, VA in 1978. With a reputation for creativity and quality framing, the



The charm of this location in the Old Town section of Alexandria complements the fine art featured in this newest Broadway Gallery location.

business continued to flourish—also attracting larger clients such as The Atlantic Gallery and P. Buckley Moss Gallery. Today, the company encompasses three locations: Extra Touch of Class (ETC) in Alexandria, VA and two Broadway Gallery locations—in Fairfax, VA and the Old Town section of Alexandria.

While Barry operates the company as a single entity, it's clear that each location maintains a unique identity.

Since its inception, this company has been known for creative, quality custom framing. And as awareness of preservation framing has increased over the years, so has Broadway Gallery incorporated this level of framing. Staff members, with an average of 10 years of industry experience, are well-versed in the design of creative and functional framing

Owner:
Barry Broadway

Locations:
Two in Alexandria, VA;
One in Fairfax, VA

Number of Employees:
14 full-time; 2 part-time

How Long in Business:
Incorporated 25 years ago
in 1978

Square Footage:
Total of 8,000; approx. 2,400
for production

solutions, including shadow boxes, acrylic boxes, mirror framing, and French matting. “We are heavily into the use of fabric-wrapped mats, fillets, and 8-ply matboard in frame design,” adds Barry.

In 1980, ETC moved to a larger space suited for an expanded production operation. This location serves as both corporate headquarters and production facility for the company. Once a week, framing orders from the other two locations are delivered to ETC to be completed. On average, close to 100 framing jobs are completed each week. The staff there (four full-time and two part-time) work efficiently to ensure the timely completion of each order. Barry notes that they work a 10-day turnaround schedule.

The additional square footage at the ETC site also enabled Sue to create a gallery space to display a selection of framed artwork and other items. In the years since, the location has come to be known as a source of varied artwork.

A second location, Broadway Gallery, was established in 1987. Located in nearby Fairfax, this gallery has been focused on offering a variety of artwork. Keeping with that vision, the gallery currently features inventory ranging from decorative to high-end, from traditional to contemporary genres. In 1996, this gallery moved to its present location—a Fairfax shopping center. This move succeeded in giving the already successful operation increased visibility.

Expanded Offerings

Over the years, art sales have become increasingly important to



The Old Town Alexandria gallery features full-service framing design, as well as a variety of framed artwork throughout.



Broadway Gallery in Fairfax is focused on offering superb framing services. A wide range of artwork is also sold at this location.

Broadway Gallery. While custom framing still accounts for more than half (55%) of revenue, art sales make up about 35% of sales. (The remainder is generated by the sale of accessory items, as well as restoration, appraisal, and installation services.)

Partly in response to this development, Barry opened a third location in 1999 in the Old Town

section of Alexandria. This new facility added another dimension to the company’s offerings; its focus is on fine art, much of which is of original work. This site also marked an achievement for Barry because he had wanted to add a fine art aspect to the company for a number of years.

In commenting on the growth and evolution of the business,

Barry notes that forging relationships is an important factor. He and his staff work hard to offer top-notch quality and service for all their clients' needs. He notes that while the company is located in an affluent area, the clientele runs the gamut. The staff is trained to work with customers on all spending levels. "A big focus is on relationship building," Barry explains. "Our salespeople are trained to cater to a variety of client needs."

Being a full-service company is significant to the company's presence and reputation. In addition to custom framing and art sales, the staff also provides art design and consultation services to assist customers with their needs. With numerous corporate and wholesale framing accounts, this service is a natural companion to the framing services. The transport of art and framing items is also offered, with transportation, installation, and packaging services available to clients located in Virginia, Maryland, and Washington, DC.

Rounding out the services offered by the company are art conservation and restoration, as well as art appraisals. Working with several restorers (specializing in works of paper and canvas, as well as frame restoration), Broadway Gallery strives to be a source for all clients' art and framing needs. Art appraisal services are offered through an accredited appraiser.

Broadway Gallery also has a long history of working with designers for client art and framing needs. Barry explains that designers are generally given a 30% discount on custom framing.

Sue established many relationships in this arena, and Barry continues to maintain these and establish new contacts. The company is an affiliate member of the American Society of Interior Designers (ASID), and advertises in the organization's newsletter.

Looking Ahead

When asked about the state of the economy and other challenges the business is facing, Barry says his current challenge is establishing the right mix of artwork sold at the Old Town Alexandria gallery. He explains that "fine tuning" the inventory to result in consistent sales is a focus at the moment. He recently placed an employee in a newly created marketing position to establish a coordinated approach to promoting the gallery and the various events and art shows featured there.

Despite the growing pains of the Old Town location, the site remains profitable. In 2001, revenue was up 34% from the year before. That figure decreased for the year 2002, but the location still marked positive growth. Barry approach is that investment is necessary for continued growth of the company as a whole. "We have tightened spending; however, we are still spending money on things we need," he explains. This is indicative of how the owners of



The ETC site serves several purposes—corporate headquarters, production facility, and showroom.

Broadway Gallery have always used their resources to provide the level of custom framing they've become known for in this area. ■