

# Creative Portrait Framing

## Design Ideas for Personal Moments

by Anne Vazquez

The cherished memories that special photos provide are important. And framing portraits of important people in our lives is how we can view these memories each day, while also protecting them from deterioration. Weddings, school photos, a family reunion, or a chance meeting with a favorite celebrity are among the many events that we want to remember.

Photo portraits are certainly personal and when presented with one to frame, it's important to find out several things—who it is in the photo, what the event is, and where it will be displayed. By asking these questions, you can get the “big picture” about what the piece means to your customer. This way, you can enhance and protect the photo and delight the owner with a personal design. No matter what it is you're framing, you have to look at the best way to enhance the image.

Weddings portraits are a common item to be custom framed, and traditionally are housed in a formal style. Much of the framing seen on wedding portraits leans toward an elegant look, which utilize a silk mat or other rich textures. Mouldings chosen are often ornate, but introducing a more contemporary look can often work as well.

In the portrait seen in Photo 1, several things factored into the materials chosen. Tim Franer, CPE, designed the piece, and explains that



Photo 1: Keeping it simple was the aim of this design. The moulding and matboard combinations were chosen to complement the photo in an elegant fashion.

the white silk mat was chosen for its simple elegance. He also bottom weighted the mat slightly to balance with the burst of fall foliage at the top of the photo.

Franer notes that this simple presentation could have been made ornate by using perhaps a more common choice for wedding photos, such as a gold leaf, carved frame. However, he preferred the simple lines of the moulding and fillet partly due to the simple hues of the apparel of the people in the photo.

The wedding portraits seen in Photos 4 and 5 are examples of how similar subject matter can be given different framing treatments. Each



Photo 2: When a customer brings in a photo, or photos, ask if they have any keepsakes that would be appropriate to frame with it. An extender was used with this moulding to create this shadowbox design.



Photo 3: The double v-groove incorporated into the mat design was used to focus on the baby.



Photo 4: This vintage photo was framed for a contemporary look with attention to the element of line.



Photo 5: This was framed with a suede mat and gold frame for a traditional design.

has a different “feel” to them, Franer explains.

In Photo 4, we see an example of an antique photo framed with contemporary elements (metal moulding and wide, uneven mat proportions). Franer focused on depth in the treatment of this portrait. The actual photo was mounted on a dark, solid core matboard. The black border you see immediately around the photo is that matboard extending out approximately  $\frac{3}{16}$ ”.

The design in Photo 5 features a more traditional look. The matboard chosen was a moss green suede that eased the transition between the

outer moulding and inner fillet. The wide mat borders were used to give “breathing room” to the photo.

The goal with the wedding photos in Photo 7 was to create a presentation that would pull the three images together. The sepia, black and white, and color photo needed to be framed in a way suitable to all, explains Greg Perkins, CPF. He chose a moulding with a tone that would complement them all, while the fillets around each helped retain the individuality of each photo.

A horizontal format was chosen for this piece, although as Perkins explains, a vertical layout would have

also been successful (if the customer wanted to display it in a narrow space, for instance).

When asked about specific design considerations specific to framing photo portraits, Perkins explains that he approaches them on an individual basis as he does with all items to be framed. However, whether the portrait is contemporary or traditional, and the event casual or formal does enter the design process to an extent.

### Portraits of Other Events

Showcasing memories is what much of custom framing is all about, and the piece in Photo 2 illustrates this.



Photo 6: This frame design was created for a unique display.



Photo 7: Three generations of the wedding portraits were combined to create this design. Being able to compare the family resemblances and different time periods makes it an interesting piece.

Perkins began with the several small portraits to create a shadowbox design. Mementos were incorporated to create a framed piece that remained focused on the portraits.

The grouping of portraits in a single frame can be successfully designed with a variety of subjects, notes Perkins. Framing individual portraits of one's children, for example, creates a unified family display. Of course, it's ultimately up

to the customer what they want to have framed, but giving these suggestions shows them what you can do, as well as increasing the sale.

The portraits seen in Photo 6 were framed in a unique display. This grouping consists of three larger frames linked by two smaller versions. This design created a unified piece to showcase three family members.

In Photo 3, the customer didn't

have a preconceived idea for the framing and also was not sure where it would hang. Franer went with a relatively simple approach; however, he didn't neglect to give the design some zest. The oval window mat was chosen to give something a little different than a rectangular opening, and it just seemed to work, he explains. A blue mat with a colored core was chosen so when the double V-groove was cut, the second blue



*Photo 8: Oval framing can be used to let the viewer "peer into" the portrait.*

(the core) added another element of color. The blues of the matting and the silver tone of the moulding was chosen because their subdued hues complemented the subject.

The options for framing portraits are as varied as the people that appear in those portraits. Providing design ideas to your customers, as well as samples for them to look at, will result in framing that they'll be delighted to display. ■

*Photo Credits*

*Photo 1: Nurre Caxton (Metropolitan Classics)*

*Photos 2 Larson-Juhl (Kensington)*

*Photos 3: Nielsen Bainbridge (Profile 94)*

*Photo 4: Nielsen Bainbridge (Profile 98)*

*Photo 5: Nurre Caxton (Tassels)*

*Photo 6: FramERICA (Black Satin)*

*Photo 7: Larson-Juhl (Medici)*

*Photo 8: InLine Ovals (Walnut finish)*