

THE **E**ssence of **D**esign

Part VI: Intensity

Intensity and textile framing seem to go hand in hand. Very often, the concept of doilies, stitcheries, and even vintage textiles like glass require depth or shadow box framing to best showcase their warmth and intricate details. What better issue than this textile issue to discuss the intensity of highlights and shadows in the frame?

Intensity and value are most often discussed in relation to color, so they become rather difficult to discuss in framing. To understand the meaning of intensity in framing, we must include tone, brightness and shade, highlights and shadow.

Webster's Dictionary defines intensity as "the relationship of one part or detail in a picture to another with respect to lightness and darkness." Framers create intensity through the use of strong creative applications and design statements including glass etching, deep bevel wrapping, and stacked mouldings.

In framing, value and intensity are partnered to become the most dramatic of the elements. They seem to set the stage for visual impact and are frequently used to stimulate feelings. It is the "visual energy of emotion" evoking viewer reaction, mood, depth, and involvement.

INTENSITY AS IT RELATES TO LIGHT

Intensity is measured by the quality of light or the specific brightness or dullness of an image. The value of an image is measured by the quan-



Photo 1: This detail of the side moulding assembly from a framed mirror illustrates the dramatic use of intensity. Highlights and shadows are reflected and images play off each other, demanding intensity be counted as an element, as well as shape. (Framed and showcased courtesy of Roma Moulding.)



Photo 2: Highlights and shadows accent the fishing flies and the stamp itself with the small window cutouts and the recessed stamp. Line, color, texture (the gold mat has a subtle texture variation), shape, and intensity are counted for a total of five elements. (This award-winning design compliments of Ray Dwyer.)

tity of light that it reflects, hence its apparent lightness or darkness, often referred to as highlights and shadows.

A shadow is a dark area created on a surface when another form is placed to prevent light from falling on that surface. On the other hand, a highlight is an area or shape which receives the greatest amount of light.

Highlighted values are pleasant, while shadowed lower values are more dramatic. The extreme contrasts between these two are often quite visually stimulating. The somewhat aggressive combinations of miters used in the assembly of the featured mirror frame seen in Photo 1 clearly illustrates extreme value contrasts, both by the frame shape itself and the mirror it houses.

The use of extremes in intensity not only attracts attention, but may also be exciting, powerful, and strong. As the frame for this mirror, the sample uses only intensity and shape as design elements. Although this

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Photo 3: An effective example of intensity and value is shown through the use of highlight and shadow in this scalloped triple window mat shadow box. This detail clearly shows elements of color, texture, shape, and intensity. (Photo courtesy of Circle Master Company.)

frame is an exciting accent for the mirror and makes a strong statement, it could overpower most other artwork.

IMPACT ON OTHER ELEMENTS

All design elements exhibit some form of contrast in order to be visible. A viewer's attention may be attracted by extreme high or low image values. However, contrast or visual surprises are much more interesting and eye-catching. Anytime highlights and shadows are used to dramatize or showcase the art or objects, intensity becomes an element to be counted in the three to five element system.



Photo 4: Wrapped foam boards naturally create deeper mats and, in turn, more highlights and shadows. This detail illustrates use of line, texture, shape, and intensity. (Photo and original artwork courtesy of author, Chris A. Paschke.)

Fillet-lined cutouts or oddly shaped windows may also create intensity, particularly when depth is involved (see Part V: Shape, *PFM*, October 2000). In Photo 2, the recessed, gold inlaid mat, used to showcase the fish stamp, echoes the shape of the outer window.

Highlights and shadows are used to accent the fishing flies and the stamp itself by the small window cutouts and the recessed stamp. Line, color, texture (the gold mat has a subtle texture variation in it), shape, and intensity are all counted for a total of five elements.

Value is relative and affected by all other elements, but it is most often linked with color (Part III: Color, *PFM*, June 2000). The existence of color is dependent on the presence of value. For example, yellow is lighter than violet, but it may be modified to be nearly equal in visual impact. Weaknesses in designs that utilize color value are easily identified by examining black and white photos of the completed project which can reveal a lack of contrast.



Photo 5 (left) and 5A (right): This unfinished framing project of the small 3-dimensional paper sculpture shows the depth of the triple $\frac{3}{16}$ " foam board mat ready to be wrapped. The deckled edges will create shadows surrounding the outer edges while the white on white sculpture will highlight itself by reflecting natural light.

EXPRESSIVE USES OF INTENSITY

Light and shadow exist in nature as by-products of physical laws. The artist/designer must adjust them in order to create an interesting visual language. In framing, the result becomes a stressing of the decorative effects, ignoring conventional light sources or neglecting the representation of light altogether until it naturally occurs within the frame.

By mounting a doily onto a centrally floated piece of glass, the shadows cast by the spaced mats and the doily itself exemplify these decorative effects (see Photo 3). The resulting effects of light as highlights and shadows must be taken into consideration based upon their contribution to the total visual framing presentation. Light will establish intensity and value as valid design elements in any given project.

INTENSITY AS DEPTH

One of the easiest ways to establish a dramatic interaction between highlight and shadow is to use spacers or a deep bevel. Wrapped foam boards of $\frac{1}{8}$ ", $\frac{3}{16}$ ", or $\frac{1}{2}$ " thicknesses, will naturally create more shadows within a frame than thinner 4-ply mats. Add spacers and mats, regardless of the art or objects, and intensity becomes an element (see Photo 4).

Both tactile and visual textures (Part IV: Texture, *PFM*, August 2000) are shown here by the detail of the wrinkled rice paper (tactile), wrapped, free-form window mats of $\frac{3}{16}$ " acid-free foam board. Smooth (visual) 4-ply free-form window mats contrast highly with an added spacer which increases the shadows of the framing design for this original calligraphic artwork.

Deep bevel designs can also be used as stacked foam boards or bevel board strips. Although shadow boxes are often thought of as deep frames to house memorabilia and other goodies, they can also be as simple as a deep bevel to allow for a thick piece of artwork or paper sculpture (see Photo 5).

Another design approach with deep bevels uses the intensity of shadow and value contrasts to highlight the natural deckle of a heavy paper casting (see Photo 5). Shadows play from beneath the art and, creating a value difference which accents the visual impact. This 4"x 6", three-dimensional paper sculpture has four highly deckled edges screaming to be showcased in a floated deep box.

This sample was left unfinished to best showcase the three layers of $\frac{3}{16}$ " foam board bevel cut windows, stacked to create depth (see Photo 5A). This window mat is now ready to be wrapped, textured, colored, or otherwise decorated to best enhance this white on white open edition image.



Photo 6: This antique necklace is framed in a deep shadow box design, using colored textured mats, backing, and sides with a delicate fillet accenting the window. Notice the natural shadows along the right and left cast from the top mat onto the bottom as exterior light attempts to eliminate the jewelry. This creates intensity. (Courtesy of Larson-Juhl.)

INTENSITY AS A SHADOW BOX

The very placement of an item in a deep box creates intensity regardless of the mood it establishes. The soft fabric mat and fillet combination used in the object box for the antique necklace in Photo 6 uses elements of line, texture, color, and intensity. Notice the natural shadows created by the deep mat-covered sides of the box and the odd shapes of the necklace itself.



Photo 7: (At top) Black leather-look corner created with Strathmore black charcoal paper and gloss laminates, (center) a panel mat using Larrouque Mouchette handmade paper in a tiered mat presentation, with spacers and accent strips of matching paper, (bottom) wrinkled rice paper-wrapped deep bevel with dry pigment coloring and painted dry pigment marbled surface panel.

STORE SAMPLES OF INTENSITY

Deep bevels can be created using an assortment of materials and, in turn, colors and textures. Two pieces of $\frac{3}{16}$ " foam board stacked together have created these corner samples for store samples (see Photo 7). All are wrapped using different techniques and showcasing different options. If a picture is worth a thousand words, store samples are no doubt worth profit dollars as well.

A customer will never understand, nor needs to be taught about, design principles, but they will be drawn to designs that are unified because the elements and factors are assembled effectively. The three corner samples in Photo 7 are used to make sales.

The depth of the designs work for paper sculptures like the rabbit in Photo 5, or objects like the collectible necklace.

These are double $\frac{3}{8}$ " foam board, wrapped, colored, and textured, with and without spacers. Many elements are showcased here, but try to keep the total between three and five.

IDENTIFYING/ESTABLISHING INTENSITY

Remember the five basic steps in the design process: *Definition, Creativity, Analysis, Production, and Clarification*. The creativity stage can only begin once the item has been labeled fine art or decorative art during the definition stage.

The purpose of framing fine art is to preserve, enhance, and protect the art, while framing decorative art allows for creative carte blanche. If a creative approach has been chosen, and intensity becomes an element, then the procedures must be approved during analysis to ensure proper handling of the object or art.

The three dimensional paper sculpture in Photos 8 and 8A has been conservationally protected. The deep bevel wrapped foam boards were wrapped with wrinkled rice paper and colored with dry pigment to work with the colors of the art. Spacers were added to create extra depth, and also to add intensity.

As an element, intensity does not spring to mind here as texture or color do. Nevertheless, it greatly affects the overall dramatics in a two-dimensional or three-dimensional design. It becomes obvious.

A good designer uses the design elements instinctively, as the tools they are meant to be. Intensity is a multi-purpose tool which utilizes light, shadow, contrast, and depth to help establish an overall mood, as well as spatial unity. The success of a framing design will be largely based upon the effectiveness in which the



Photos 8 and 8A: This project, long retired from the traveling display of Hunt Manufacturing, is a classic, clean example of line, color, texture, and intensity. It showcases the art within an intriguing frame design. (Courtesy of Seal Products.)

designer has made intensity and value serve these functions.

Art is concerned with the creation of a work that will arouse an aesthetic response. What we perceive with our eyes in paint, sculpture, drawing, prints, photos, and framing may result in our feeling of delight, admiration, shock, rapture, intrigue, or disinterest. It's up to the frame designer to understand and control the presentation; intensity is just another step toward the entire picture.

Happy Holidays and try not to be too intense! See you for Valentine's Day with Part VII: Space. ■

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