

# Frame Design

by Tim Franer, CPF, CMG

## Form & Function

**H**ow many of your customers are unaccustomed to choosing wider mat proportions for their picture framing? How many times have we seen a 2" or 3" even mat border used because it's the norm?

### Before & After



*A small reproduction of a J.J. Audubon print was framed with the same materials, just with differing mat proportions. Shown here, side by side, the two pieces illustrate the impact of designing with varying and larger mat borders.*



And, often, customers want to use a narrower border because they think it is less expensive and don't understand how important proportions are; in fact, they often can make or break the overall presentation. From the framer's point of view, I have found that some framers think wide mats are overwhelming, compete with the artwork, and increase the cost of the job out of the customer's price range.

In order to help your customers visualize wider and/or varying mat proportions, the best approach is to

have framed examples on display in your gallery. Take a look at the two frame designs on the opening page of this article. In the example on the left, this reproduction of a small J.J. Audubon print has been framed with an even 3" border all around. The example on the right shows the same print framed with borders of three varying widths, to illustrate the impact of this technique. When the even borders are expanded to utilize proportion, the print becomes the subject of a well-balanced framing design.

Example 1 is shown using the 3" even border with a double mat and a black beveled accent spacer to add dimension to the piece. The black accent spacer was used to support the color of the subject and creates a focal point. The natural color, 6 ply/4ply matting gives the subject minimal breathing space, however, with the silver leaf frame creating closure.

For Example 2, a wide proportion double mat was used, giving the artwork breathing room. The top, sides, and bottom borders are different dimensions to support the well-balanced piece. The same mat and spacers combination was used to illustrate how expanding the mats can enhance the overall view of the finished piece.

When it comes to pricing, some will debate that adding a wider mat will move the frame job out of the customer's price range. However, the matboard purchased for this job, for either example one or two, is a 32"x40" sheet. In the first example with the even mat borders, it will take two 11"x14" mats, and in Example 2, it will take two 16"x20" mats to complete the job. In this situation, matboard cost will be the same regardless which frame size you use. In Example 2, frame and glass will have minimal cost increase, but the overall results are stunning.

In addition to showing examples like this on your walls, supporting materials, such as current home decorating magazines and explaining current trends, will help the customer understand and shows you are on the leading edge of design and trend happenings.

The examples showing a before and after using wider proportion mats will help you in selling an important element of frame design. Having these two examples displayed in your gallery will create a dynamic impact and easy sale. ■



*Shown here is a detail of the matting treatment that was used in both frame designs.*



*Visual examples, such as this display of the two prints on a showroom wall, illustrate the difference that expanding mat borders makes. This kind of merchandising approach can also serve to highlight the options available with custom framing, overall.*

Tim Franer, CPF, CMG, has spent more than 30 years in the art and custom framing industry. Known for his creative design and skilled craftsmanship, Tim is a former gallery owner and is currently a chairholder with the Color Marketing Group. He is currently development, design, and educational consultant for Nielsen Bainbridge.

