

Trends on the Horizon for 2004

by Anne Vazquez

As the new year begins, what better time to look at the trends that influence the designs you create for customers? Creative, interesting, and personal

is what most framing customers are looking for these days. Capturing the look and feel of the item being framed is, as always, an important part of the framing process. In addition, the desire of many customers to have the finished piece work with the interior where it will eventually be displayed means that there can be a variety of options for each piece.

As such, moulding designs popular with framers continue to run the gamut. Specialty finishes and interesting profiles catch the fancy of customers who want something out-of-the-ordinary, bold, or just something that they've not seen anywhere else.

However, frames featuring the gleam of wood furniture finishes remain a popular choice. The fact that themes of nature and materials from nature (wood and stone, for example) continue to be prevalent keeps these moulding finishes, with their clean and simple lines, at the forefront.

On this theme of clean lines, moulding profiles that subtly surround an image are rising in favor. "My customers are more receptive to polished sleek lines. Black continues to be



This framing design represents many of the trends predicted to continue into 2004. The bust contained in the frame was an item of sentimental value to the customer. The shadowbox design utilized a textured, sueded mat and a wide moulding with a specialty finish. (courtesy of Michael Jones, FastFrame of LaJolla, San Diego, CA)

Creating unique framing designs remains the important focus for custom framers in today's market. Efficient operations is also key.

strong—in all widths,” says Janet Berry, CPF, owner of Frame Masters Gallery in Shelby, NC.

Matting designs continue to go the high road in many instances, with textured designs becoming more and more prevalent in even simple framing. Perhaps the popularity of clean and simple lines in a moulding is a contributing factor to the increased usage of mats that feature a pattern or texture; they do not compete with the moulding.

Fabric textures are high on the list of choices for framers. And the patterns available on paper mats, and from specialty paper suppliers, offer a virtually endless selection to complement artwork.

Derek and Christine Vandenberg, owners of Frame of Reference in Bigfork, MT, express their enthusiasm with the increasing number of textured mats on the market. “There are more textures in mats than ever before and we love it!” they say. “We tend towards textured matboards and fillets for mat decoration. We also do a lot more reverse bevels [than in the past,” the Vandeborgs add.



This animation cel of Disney's "Sleeping Beauty" features matting designed with a space for information about the image. This touch makes the piece all the more personal. (courtesy of ArtInsights, Reston, VA)



The textured linen of the matting in this framing design not only brings out the beauty of this piece, but also "warms" it. (courtesy of Leslie Sieswerda, L Consultants Fine Art & Design Gallery, Atlanta, GA)

design option. And as more consumers consider custom framing as an option for their personal, treasured items, the gamut of these items is widening. Betty Newman, owner of Newman Valley Studio in Kodak, TN, says, “I'm seeing people framing more 'stuff' these days. Even if it's flat (as opposed to shadowbox items), it's still memorabilia—photos, certificates, articles, and, even, magazine ads. People seem to be framing memories, in general, these days.”

In describing the overall trend at her store, Ellen Collins, owner of Howard's Art Supplies & Frames in Hagerstown, MD, says, “We are selling a lot of what I call 'opulently simple' framing. There's less 'frou-frou,' and a really classic look.” But a classic look does not mean that framers don't pull out the bells and whistles for designs. Creating space and depth continues to be a relatively simple, yet effective, approach to increasing the impact of a framing design. Inserting spacers or foam-board between matting layers is one way this is achieved.

Also, double and triple mats are becoming more of the norm in many frame shops. Seems once a customer sees the double or triple design, they opt more often for that in favor of a single mat.

Deep Thoughts

The trend toward framing treasured three-dimensional items for display has kept shadowboxes as a popular

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Eye on Efficiency

In terms of overall trends in the industry, efficiency appears to be on the minds of those running a framing operation. The increased competition in the overall consumer market, as well as in the industry, makes this a concern more than ever.

Creating depth continues to be a popular way to increase the impact of a frame design.

“I’m always finding ways to make my business more efficient,” says Newman. She adds that discovering how to use Mylar recently has been “the greatest thing since sliced bread.” A goal for Newman in 2004, to increase her efficiency, is to incorporate point-of-sale software into her operation.

The increasingly competitive marketplace is just one more reason custom framers should be focusing on efficiency. The number of sources for framed artwork is greater than ever and the focus on providing quality, professional services is at a premium. Fortunately, the selection of framing materials and exchange of information is also at a high. The industry, as a whole, recognizes the need to continue to be a cut above in product selection, customer service, design, production techniques, and more. ■