

proportions

As we progress through 2001, changes are happening all around us. Take, for instance, the ongoing waves of change in the economy. Then you have the fashion industry, which seems to change almost daily, although certain styles actually hit the mainstream market and wind up hung in the closets of most of us. Even the homes people live in have changed: with each passing year, they seem to get larger, with taller ceilings and more wall space.

We still want more, but now it's a quest for the unusual that has captured our attention. The lure of the unique comes from many places. Our world has opened up, with just about anything at our fingertips with the click of an Internet button. We see the unusual and find it interesting. We not only want it, but we can actually have it.

The world of picture framing and art have come together and have realized that they too must change. Creative and unusual looks that fit the homes and offices of today are a must. If you are not offering something to fit that need, you will lose out on one of the biggest revelations in framing in a long time.

What is this great change and how will it be a benefit to your business? For starters, I have



Photo 1: One way to create an eye-catching look is to make the sides borders of the mat larger than the bottom and top mat borders

noticed the size of the average house is growing; now the world of wall art and how it is presented must grow with it. Big is in. Large images help to set the base for a dynamic display. With large subjects, larger (and wider) matting and proportionally larger frames are a must.

We can no longer bring out to a client's home a framed piece that is the ordinary 30"x40" size with 3" borders and expect it to work in the decor styles of today. I'm not saying that the art itself would not work, (if, of course, it is the color and style that the customer likes),

but a lot of the formula is in *how* we are going to frame it.

As you change your approach, you should still begin the design process where you normally do—with the matting. Border colors will still be determined by the art and the surroundings in which it will hang, but the dimensions are up to you and your customer.

Picture framers and designers all want to be creative and have their clients get excited about the great look they came up with. Once you have the colors in mind, you have to think size—as in, what size will you make the borders of

in framing

by Timothy Dykstra, CPF

the matting. If you still are using the old 2¾" mat samples, the job will be a little more difficult; but if you are using the new wider samples of 4", the ideas will come across more clearly. (Once again, having the tools to sell quickly and correctly proves to be so important.)

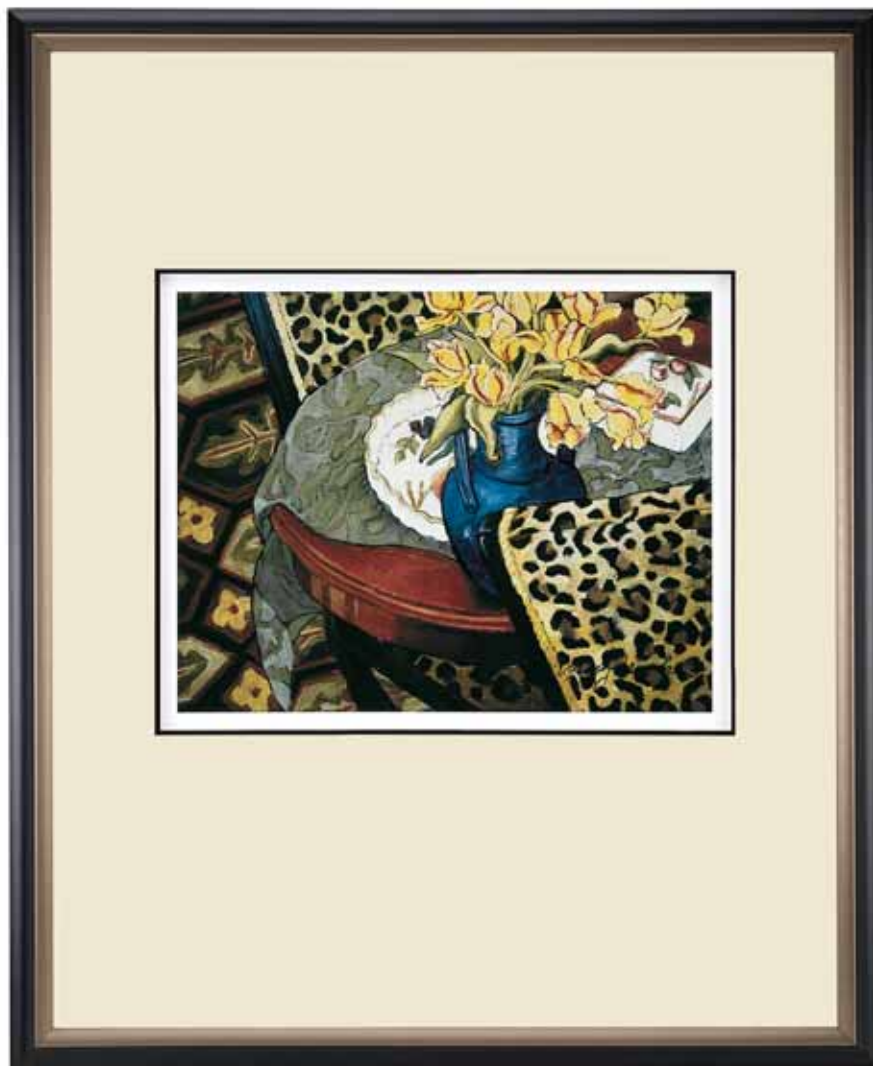


Photo 2: Another design option is to make the mat border sides smaller than the top and bottom of the mat borders.

Once the matting color and the size that will work in the room are discussed, choose a frame that will complement the overall design. Large presentations need larger frames, not only for structural reasons but, more importantly, for balance and proportion.

I recently completed a project that was oversized. It not only took special matting considerations, but also a 5"-wide frame with a very substantial surface to be joined together. Strength had to be a consideration as the piece weighed over 90 pounds when completed and was intended to hang 18 feet up along an open stairway. Having 10" mat borders on this project was an essential design point in order to balance the very large image that was chosen. Remember, the bigger the project, the bigger the parts.

Wide Open Options

When a design with unique proportions is sought after, you will find the options are wide open. You just need to think out of the box and try something new. What I'm referring to is the use of odd-shaped proportions.

For instance, you can make the mat side borders larger than the bottom and top borders (see Photo 1). You can also make just one side larger in a diptych design (see Figure 1, example a).

One of the most popular techniques in odd-shaped matting is to add extra space to the bottom portion of the mat, which gives a dramatic top centered look (see Photos 2 and 3). For example, add an extra 4" of matting to the bottom of a piece of art (see Figure 1, example b). This simple technique changes the overall look of the piece for the better, giving more options in decor placement (see Photo 4).

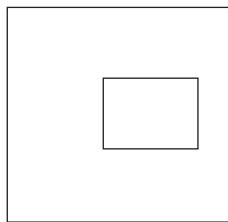
Weighting the bottom does not have to be drastic. Using this technique in a subtle way can be just as effective in making an eye-catching design (see Photo 6).

Your main concern is to make it fit the room and fill the space. People living with high ceilings and large wall space usually don't want rows and rows of framed art. They request fewer pieces, but still want the wall to look full. This may mean only one larger piece or maybe a diptych with wider mats or odd proportions to join the two pieces together. It doesn't mean group-

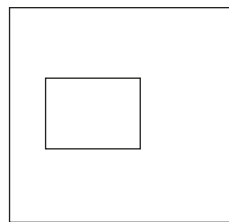


Photo 3: The weighted bottom of this matting seems to "elevate" the artwork.

Figure 1



example a



example b

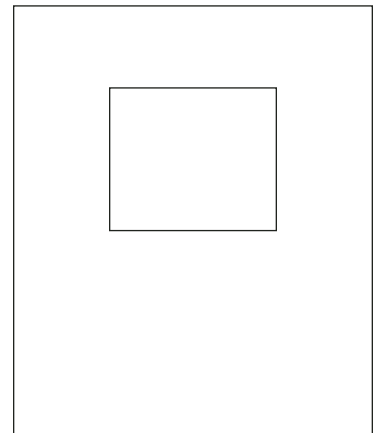


Photo 4: As seen in the room setting, weighting the bottom of the mat creates an interesting look.



Photo 5: Attract attention by making the mat borders proportionately smaller than the art.

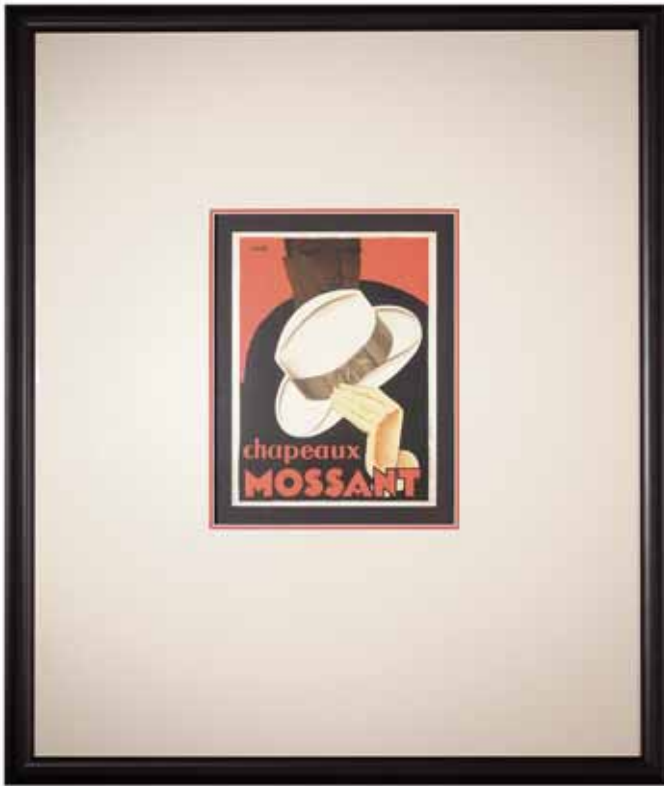


Photo 6: Even subtle differences in matting dimensions, such as the slightly weighted bottom seen here, can make a great design.



Photo 7: Something as small as a postage stamp can become a substantial piece. This results in a larger piece with increased impact.

ings can't be done but a more geometric clustering approach is needed instead.

You can also make the matting dimensions proportionately smaller than the artwork. While you may think this would crowd the artwork, oftentimes it's quite attractive (see Photo 5).

And while we're on the topic of small, don't miss out on the opportunity to maximize small art. Something as small as a postage stamp can be a substantial piece when framed with proportionately oversized mats, multiple mats, and wider mouldings than you'd usually choose. The result is a much larger piece which draws the eye powerfully to the art object and gives it added impact (see Photo 7).

Remember, with more matting comes the obvious need for a larger frame or even a stacked moulding. The end result is a bigger project that is higher on the united inches chart, which costs more and generates more profit. Here is the winning formula, "Bigger matting + bigger frames = bigger profits!"

Simple math, isn't it? But too often we think the client will not go along with a more stylized look that may end up costing more. But when you underestimate what you can sell, you can end up not giving customers

what they really want—a unique, creative display that will fit in their home or office. If you do it right, the customer will be more satisfied in the end.

You still have four corners to join, matboard to cut, and assembly to perform, but you make more money. It's the same overall labor and effort, just bigger materials that create more united inches, which in turn raise the retail price. The customer is happy and so are you. Everyone wins!

Don't miss out on the "here and now" of picture framing. Your business needs to stick with the times and stay out of the ruts. Once you do one or two of these projects you will see how easy they really are to sell and produce—and how great the finished project looks. Give it a try and make your gallery art, your client's artwork, and you, more unique and profitable. ■

Photos courtesy of Nielsen & Bainbridge and the Art & Framing Council.