

Trends in Moulding

by Anne Vazquez



There's no doubt that our world is full of trends. Teenagers must have the latest fashions in clothing. New automobile models catch our eye each year. There's even trendy places to vacation. And of course there's trends in

framing. As some sources say, custom framing is "furniture for the walls." While some may see this as a flippant way to describe the art of framing, the question remains: how do home décor trends translate into what moulding styles to sell in your shop? Answer: It really depends on what your customer wants. The fact is some people follow the beat of their own drum, whether they are their own trendsetter or haven't changed their style in decades.

However, they're not called trends for nothing. Currently, there are moulding styles that reflect the look that many people want for their framed items. These include mouldings with a handcrafted appearance, metallic finishes on wood, rustic looks, "big" profiles, and layered finishes. This does point towards one trend—consumers want frames that are either different than, or a step above, the framed art they see in most department and home décor stores. And they come to their custom framer to satisfy this desire.

At the International Home Furnishings Market in High Point, NC this past April, the dominating styles reflected the continuing and strong influence of Old World European styles, as well as "modern country," coastal styles, and Asian and exotic locales. A uniform trend, however, is a desire for comfort in an elegant package.

Many of the moulding styles we see from suppliers certainly reflect this trend—whether it's a rich burlwood, an antiqued whitewash, or a weathered rustic. Profiles are bigger—wider and chunkier. As consumers have become more aware of a frame as its own entity, they want their



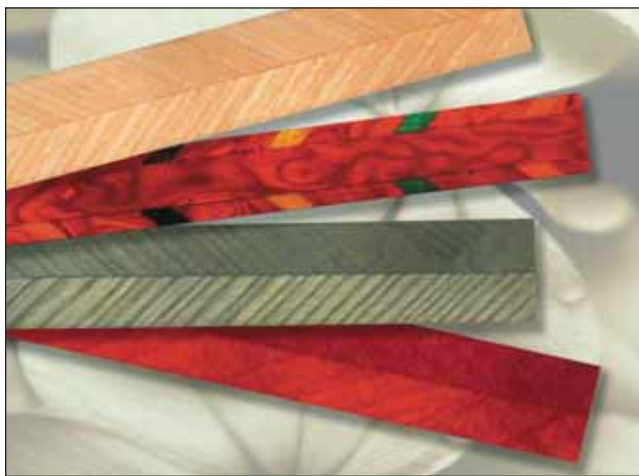
Whitewashed finishes complement today's modern cottage look. Here, a profile and fillet from Larson-Juhl's Stockholm Collection adds to the relaxed feeling of the image it surrounds.



Metallic finishes are favored for the contemporary, yet comfortable, mood they help to convey. Silvers, golds, pewters, and bronze are all included in this trend.

frames to be a work of art as well (even though this may be a subliminal desire for many).

In speaking to suppliers and framers about what's "hot" in picture frame moulding, a recurring theme was a focus on the finish. The demand for quality from the consumer is resulting in the popularity of mouldings that convey a richness and craftsmanship. This ranges from brushed metallic looks and layering techniques to antiqued looks and interesting wood grains. People are looking for a quality frame design



Consumers are gravitating toward mouldings that are different. Mouldings that appear to be handcrafted are popular. This Bella moulding features inlaid designs.

that will make the most impact while it complements their artwork or item.

Ellen Collins, owner of Howard's Art & Supplies in Hagerstown, MD, has noted a demand for gold and silver mouldings that have patterns etched on them, or layers of finishing. "When you show a customer those types of mouldings, and they see the multiples layers of finish, they get excited by the quality," explains Collins. "And then they usually buy it, despite the price," she adds.

The demand for textured metallic mouldings complements the eclectic

interiors that so many people are creating for themselves. These mouldings provide a contemporary look with the shimmer of metal, whatever the hue, while a layered look or brushed effect imparts a warmth to the piece.

Pam Collins, manager at Webb Rawls Galleries in Columbia, SC, is seeing more of an interest in reverse profiles that are more modern with finishes that are antiqued, pitted, or metallic. Meanwhile, Peter Kolf, vice president of Presto Frame & Moulding notes a rise in demand for

more contemporary looks with a nice finish. The company's Sequoia and Splash profiles are examples of that trend.

Bold, wide, antiqued frames, in both silver and gold, have been popular for James Miller, owner of ArtFrame, Inc. in Pickerington, OH. He has also noted that his

customers have been choosing more finished corner and custom-finished mouldings, such as added washes.

In New York City, Joseph Bretano, junior partner at Grand Terminal Gallery, Inc., sees a range of mouldings that are popular with his clients. "If their home or office is ornate, then so is the frame. If the décor is understated, then odds are the frame chosen will be as well," he explains. However, Bretano does mention several trends that stand out: wider, yet not ornate frames; and silver finishes over black gesso



Some framers are finding that the increased variety of metal mouldings has given them new design options. Metals with ornament are also popular.

moulding, often used when framing black and white prints or photographs.

A wider selection of metal mouldings has increased sales of these items at Bretano's gallery. He says that with metals now being made in finishes and styles that complement today's tastes and trends, they are no longer limited to the "70's" look in metals. While Bretano often does use metal for the more inexpensive framing orders, he points out that the new styles and tones are lending themselves to a slew of new ideas.

In woods, mahogany and mission styles are frequent customer choices at Grand Terminal Gallery. Meanwhile, there's been a decrease in demand for color on ramin mouldings, with Bretano observing that many people are looking for a clean and simple look without having to try and match colors.

Of course, it all depends on where you are. In Bigfork, MT, Derek Vandenberg, owner of Frame of Reference, says that the more urban moulding styles aren't especially popular with his customers. As a



Richly-colored wood grains are among the favorites with custom framing customers. The examples seen here are from Designer Moulding.

gallery in this small resort town, Vandeberg explains that much of what he frames is for the second homes of people who want a “piece of Montana.”

“We didn’t really see a big interest in bamboos or barnwood mouldings,” says Vandeberg. “We do a lot of high end mouldings.” What continues to be popular in his shop are the interesting rustics available, and what Vandeberg describes as European

antique. He explains that burlwoods, those like Monticello from Roma, are popular on this European trend.

“Big mouldings are also always popular,” he adds. And while an earthy style seems prevalent here, Vandeberg notes that rustic mouldings in various colors are also movers.

Meanwhile, whitewashed surfaces and natural wood grains signify the looks found in today’s “cottage” interiors. For people that shy away from the boldness often found in European inspired rooms, the themes that make up the modern country look is strong enough to create a interesting, personal environment.

The Stockholm collection from Larson-Juhl is an example of moulding that can be used for this look. An antiqued, white finish, embellished with beadwork, can give a quiet strength to the artwork it houses.

But the cottage look is not all white and wispy. Woods such as pine

and oak are strong contenders in this theme. Collins says that, while the layered looks are in demand, her dark oak mouldings also remain strong. “It goes with the country look... not the blue and mauve country look,” she explains.

With the plethora of mouldings available today, what more could you ask for? Well, there are a few things. Pam Collins would like to see more natural woods with craftsmanship. More complete families of mouldings, featuring coordinated and stackable mouldings, liners, and fillets are at the top of Miller’s list. And Bretano loves those exotic woods, but not their prices!

Differences are to be expected in moulding preferences from city to city, and sometimes even shop to shop. But one thing stays constant; getting a feel for what each customer wants is the best trend to follow. ■

