

Frame Design

by Tim Franer, CPF, CMG

Form & Function

Designing For A Specific Wall Space

Have you ever had a customer bring in a series of photographs, or of any other medium, and tell you that he or she has a specific space in mind for the pieces? And, because that space is a focal point in the room, the customer requests that the design utilize colored matting and a creative moulding design?

In the example shown here, I've shown one way to address the objective of designing a grouping for a specific (and sometimes minimal) hanging space by planning a unified layout. To achieve the objective, the following steps of design and form were taken.



Frame Design

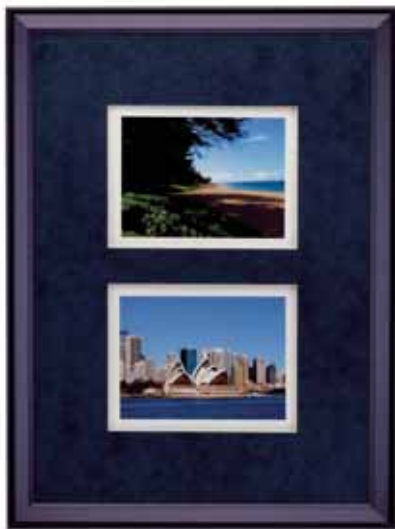
In working on the layout of a frame design, my objective is always to create a finished framed piece (or pieces) in which the components complement and enhance what is being framed. With the plan to use color in the matting and a creative moulding design, the first step was to review all of the photos to see how they could be arranged in three frames—versus framing each photo individually—to save space.

In reviewing the six photographs, I observed that each subject matter was different in content and size. I also noted that the particular subjects all related to travel and all shared a very nice blue color. With the dominant blue coloring, I selected a textured, dark blue mat that would give a neutral balance for each of the photos. The dark blue texture also creates a visual border that directs the eye in toward the subject matter.

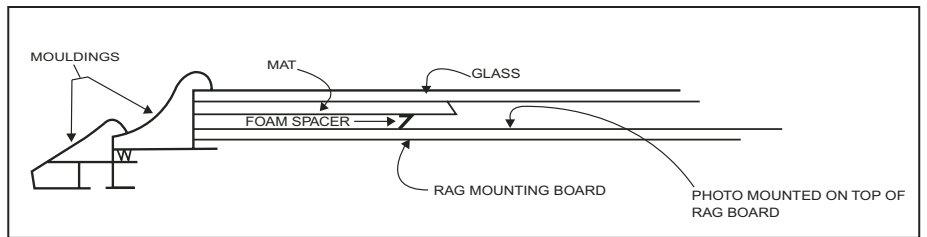
I then decided to extend each mat opening out $\frac{1}{2}$ " from the outer edge of the image, leaving a white border around each. The white border creates the impression of double matting and also blends into the white beveled edge of the matboard itself.

Take note of the bottom opening in the center frame where the photograph was a different size and its white space was not in the scope of the design. I decided to place this odd-sized photo in the bottom, center opening to maintain a balanced look and to minimize the difference.

To keep this layout of photographs from looking flat, I decided to use a



In designing for these photographs, the first step was to discover what they had in common. Next, framing components were chosen that would work with all of the images. A special case was the photograph shown in the bottom center of the middle frame. Its placement in the grouping was meant to visually minimize that difference.



Cross-section of frame design

$\frac{3}{16}$ " foamboard spacer between each photograph and the blue mat. This helped to create a dimensional effect in all three frames. The 4" wide mat around the images, and 2" of vertical space between each photo, helps give a sense of balance and focus when viewing the grouping.

The Frame

Selecting a frame that complements this grouping format is sometimes difficult. The customer had requested something "unusual" and with that in mind, I decided to create a stacked frame consisting of two mouldings. I selected two metal mouldings, both with a cobalt blue finish. The brushed cobalt blue blended very well with the color of the matting that had been chosen.

Stacking these mouldings created a custom look in design, which, in turn, complemented the other framing components and subject matter. In framing these photographs, I found that keeping the moulding and matting simple, yet with a creative twist, enhanced them very well.

Hanging

When you know you are designing for a specific space, it's important to keep furnishings in mind such as tables, chairs, and lamps. How high should you hang the pieces? How much space should be in between each frame? What happens when a light fixture is in front of part of the frame?

These are important questions and in this design example, we answered them. The three framed pieces were hung about $2\frac{1}{2}$ " apart from each other. The height at which each frame would be hung was determined by the height of the table underneath. Anytime, you are hanging a frame, it is important not to position them too high. This can take away from a sense of balance. Also, you want to prevent viewers from having to look up to see the piece. Placing the lamp to one side, as shown, is a way to create a good balance to where all components of the grouping—table, lamp, books, wall space, and flooring work together.

Creating the three frames, all with colored mats and stacked mouldings, for the six photographs solved the customer dilemma. Not only were specific issues resolved, but the resulting pieces fit well into the small display space. Whether you provide installation services, or simply give advice on hanging to customers when they are in your store, knowing some tricks to working with an intended display space gives customers a service they may not find elsewhere. ■

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.

