

Design Options for Textiles

by Anne Vazquez

The options that exist when custom framing a textile are as vast and varied as the types of textiles that you may encounter. Conservation issues and aesthetic appeal should both be considered, and the client's desires must be discovered before you can decide on a frame design for the textile at hand. For instance, have they brought you their child's christening outfit, which they want to cherish and display for many years? Or is it a silk scarf that they'd like to show decoratively for the "short-term?" Whatever the case, several design options are discussed here that could be applied to some of the projects you are given.

When Mary Beth Darin, manager of Gallery Northwest in



Photo 2: This kimono was housed to be viewed from all angles. (courtesy of Ira Freinle, CPF)



Photo 1: This embroidery on silk was mounted to foamboard with stitches about 1/2" apart around the entire piece. (courtesy of Tru Vue, Inc.)

Palatine, IL was presented with the silk embroidery piece seen in Photo 1, she approached the design with the same care that she does all her projects. The client had brought the item back from Hong Kong and wanted to protect the delicate silk fibers. Thus, it was framed with attention to conservation, as well as subtle visual impact.

She began by stitching it to a conservation-quality foamboard. The embroidery measured approximately 27"x44 1/2" and the stitches were spaced about a 1/2" apart. Due to the size of the piece, Darin decided upon a mat border of 4 1/4" for balanced proportions. She used a white matboard with

a black core to set off the image.

Since conservation was a primary concern for the delicate silk item, she decided upon Conservation Ultraclear glass from Tru Vue, for both its UV-filtering and colorless qualities. A black moulding to complement the Asian theme was chosen to pull it all together. The finished piece measured 36"x53 1/2".

Another textile project of note was done by Ira Freinle, CPF of Creations 'n Things in Emerson, NJ. The needlepoint Japanese kimono in Photo 2 was designed to be viewed from all sides.

A piece of black acrylic formed the base with two slotted rods glued vertically at each end. A black plastic bar, with rounded ends, was placed in the slots of the

uprights to hold the kimono. A five-sided acrylic box was then installed over the assembly. The finished size of the piece was 10" high, with a depth of approximately three inches.

Freinckle notes that he considered including shadow box mouldings to the design. However, he then thought it would have too heavy a look for this relatively small item. Also, the client wanted to be able to see from all angles.

The wedding dress in Photo 3 is another textile challenge framed at Freinckle's shop. Rather than mounting the dress on a hanger, it was padded to give it form. The garment was sewn into place using cotton thread, with stitching at the seams for reinforcement. The padding was also stitched at some spots for added stability. The completed piece was nearly six feet tall, and required 10" of depth.

The item seen in Photo 4 is a christening suit that one of Freinckle's clients brought in to be framed for display. The outfit consists of an overcoat, a suitcoat, a waistcoat, a lace blouse, and trousers. As with the wedding dress project, padding was used to give form. (Freinckle mentions that he uses Dacron padding because it does not absorb moisture.) By strategically folding and draping the various garments, he made sure that each item



Photo 3: The design for this 19th century wedding dress resulted in a nearly six-foot high frame. (courtesy of Ira Freinckle, CPF)



Photo 4: The christening outfit was padded to add more depth to the frame design. (courtesy of Ira Freinckle, CPF)

would be visible to viewers. This box was only three inches deep, so it could have been handled readily with a shadow box moulding, but it would not have had the light airy appearance that was desired by the client. As can be done with many shadow box designs, Freinckle included things that related to the main focus. In this case, a photo of the baby and the invitation to the christening were incorporated.

Another christening outfit that Freinckle framed recently had been worn by family members since 1901. It had been "retired" because of the fabric weaknesses that had developed. So with conservation issues in mind, the dress was reinforced in the weakest spots, padded inside to show pleating details, and stitched gently in place onto a mounting board.

As an additional design feature, the names of all the children who had worn the dress were typewritten on a good quality sheet of paper and attached to the mounting board. Freinckle says they suggest this added touch to customers whenever it's applicable and many people opt for it. Whatever the textile brought to you, there are many things that can be done to enhance the richness of these items.

