

Looking At Shadowbox Designs

compiled by Anne Vazquez

Over the course of their careers, custom framers are presented with items that run the gamut. From personal mementos to favorite artwork to simple posters, there's virtually no limit to what you'll see on any given day at the design counter. For this article, several frame shops submitted recent shadowbox projects, and have included information about the construction, as well as their thought process behind the design...

Sliding Scale

What Framed: Slide Rule framed to work from inside the frame

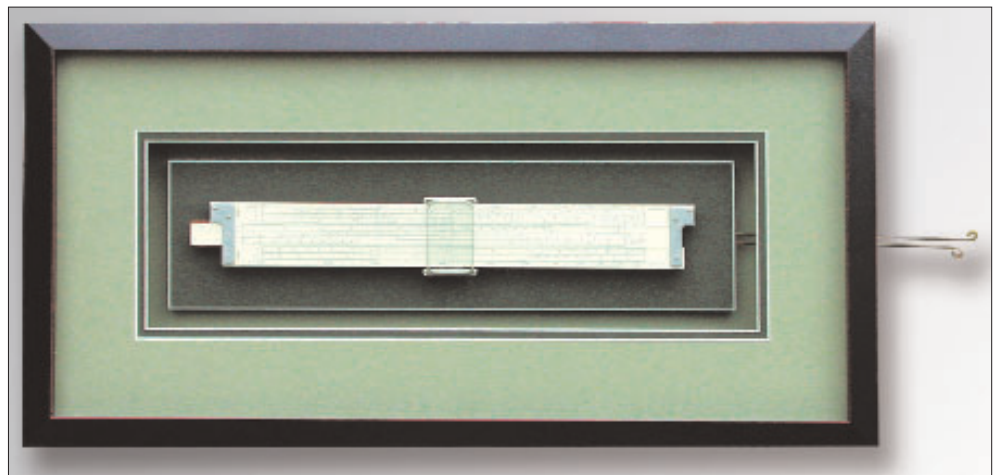
Where Framed: FastFrame of La Jolla in San Diego, CA

Who Framed: Michael Jones (co-owner, framing for four years), Lesley Jones (co-owner, framing for four years), Grant Schmidt (employee, framing for 16 years)

Materials Used: Frame: Studio Moulding 336-134. Mats: Crescent 1703 (Foxhunt Green); Bainbridge 8129 (Sea Grass). Foamboard for layering build-ups. Conservation glass. Brass welding rod. Silicone glue.

Other Facts: Overall dimensions are 21"x13½". Took about two hours to complete. Retail price \$300.

From the Designers: Many older generation dot.comers, engineers, and bio-tech designers in our area "cut their teeth" in school using a slide rule for mathematical calculations before the invention of the desktop or handheld calculator. When we framed this for an in-store display, we wanted to show off the slide rule, and



The handle on the outside of the frame allows the owner to operate the slide rule while also being able to display it.

we also wanted to add a little something extra by making it work from outside the frame. We call this "The Original Thinking Out of The Box" piece. The final design was influenced by the latitude of operation possible from where we would connect the operating rods that were attached to the back of the slide rule with silicone glue. Although the slide rule is not fully functional, it gives a good representation. We did the first of these for ourselves to have something unique to show customers. It worked in that we have done six others in the past four years. Some people want just the slide rule, some want the case also, and one customer wanted two slide rules and their cases.

While the slide rule is not very deep, we needed room for the rods that operate it to be hidden as they came in from the side. This involved many layers of foamboard built up between the mats. The biggest challenge of the entire project was threading the operating rods through small holes in the side of the frame as the piece was assembled. We then added the handle on the end of the rod so the slide rule could be operated while in the frame.

The Write Stuff

What Framed: Drawing Pens and Drafting Compasses

Where Framed: Creations n' Things, Inc. in Emerson, NJ

Who Framed: Design and construction executed by Ira Freinckle, CPF, vice president and manager. 35 years in the industry.

Materials Used: Frame: Decor Moulding 3847. Mats: Crescent 54114 and 1567. Regular glass. Acid-Free foamboard. Hot glue.

Other Facts: Overall Dimensions: Pens: 14"x17", Compasses: 12"x16". Each took about 1½ hours. Retail price: Pens \$217, Compasses \$203.

From the Designer: The items framed in one shadowbox were drawing pens; in the other were two drafting compasses. All had been used by our customer's father, an artist. The customer had us frame the pens first. When she picked the piece up, she liked it so much that she looked for more of her father's pieces to frame. She has the two pieces hanging near each other over the table in her breakfast nook.

The customer had considered including a photograph of her father in the frame with the pens. However, she did not have a suitable photograph, so we decided upon supplied a silver finished plate with his name on it.

In the framing of both sets of items, we wanted a plain black moulding, and showed the customer several deep black mouldings. We selected this particular matting because while the pens were actually used for drawing, the overall aged effect of the mat seemed to work very well with the old, well-used look of the pens. The antique color and pseudo-random look of the writing acted to emphasize the aged look of the pens and compasses.

The Crescent 1567 mat had about the same tone as the face mat, so it was used as the boxing, set in about ¼" from the edge of the bevel. The pens and compasses are held in place with very fine wire located at strategic places so they are minimally visible.

Everything we frame, we regard as an interesting



These two pieces, though designed on two different occasions, were created to be displayed together in the customer's home.

challenge because we try to make everything unique. If we find something new to frame, or achieve a new design idea, we attempt to work out the details while we

are working with the customer. Then if something has to be explained to them, it is done before the piece is finished, not afterwards.

Kitchen Kitsch

What Framed: The shadowbox houses a vintage egg beater, a recipe for griddlecakes from a vintage cook-book, a pair of very happy salt and pepper shakers, and an antique rolling pin backed with a vintage red rooster tablecloth.

Where Framed: The Art Barn in Ossining, NY

Who Framed: Designed by Jane and Sue, and executed by Sue Mallozzi, 20-year framing veteran.

Materials Used: Frame: Xylo Ash shadowbox moulding, Max Moulding black fillet on inner openings. Mat: Crescent black acid-free. Conservation glass.

Other Facts: Overall dimensions are 19"x27". Executed in about eight hours. Retail price \$850.

From the Designers: This shadowbox was intended to create a dramatic effect in the collector's kitchen; we call it kitchen kitsch! The fabulous vintage pieces are from the customer's collection and now instead of collecting dust on a shelf, they have become the centerpiece of the most important room in her house.

This trusting soul allowed us free range with all design elements; we asked her for the tablecloth to use as backing, rather than a matboard we stock. The shelf



This shadowbox was designed to complement the vintage domestic items it houses.

that holds the salt and pepper shakers sports the original fringe from the vintage red rooster tablecloth; that design element was a last-minute stroke of genius by Sue Mallozzi. This was another fun, creative project for The Art Barn; we didn't want to see it go home.

There's No Business Like Show Business...

What Framed: Hollywood Squares game box, four plastic game pieces (X's and O's), and three playing cards

Where Framed: Kennedy Studios in Portsmouth, NH

Who Framed: Maria Ayer, manager, framing for five years; Lin Thorpe, head framer, framing for 15 years; Tim Gilbert, framer, framing for five years

Retro was the order of the day for these items bound for California.



Materials Used: Frame: Larson-Juhl Soho 433082. Mats: TruVue 5351 Orangeade with a black core; Crescent Aruba 1642; Crescent Lapis 1626. Mounting supplies: game box with 3M Dual Lock velcro strips; cards with Lineco linen tape; game pieces secured with silicone glue.

Other Facts: Overall dimensions 24"x21". Took between four and five hours to complete. Retail price \$605.

From the Designers: The design of this project was left entirely in our hands. The customer basically came in and said, "This is a gift for the producer of the show. I'd like something that he could hang in his office, it needs to be shipped, and it should be a manageable size." So, as we often do at the shop, each of us came up with a design idea and the

customer came back later to discuss the options. My feeling was to keep it clean and simple, choose colors that were bright and had a retro feel, and also to mimic an actual television. Therefore, the heavy frame was perfect and all of the game pieces were meant to suggest knobs while repeating the overall graphics of the game box itself. The customer loved it. (The challenging part was creating a three dimensional drawing of the walls so the customer could understand what the piece would look like when it was finished.)

There were a few other minor challenges in putting this piece together. The side walls for each of the five openings were individually cut and attached with foamboard walls supporting them. It required the depth of nine foamboards to create this project; that's a lot of

cutting! (We used our Esterly mat cutter for this project.) I had to cut ¼" holes for the "feet" of the game pieces to rest inside to where they adhered to another board.

Since this was to be shipped to California, extra measures were taken for stability, the matting walls were secured not only with ATG tape, but glue as well. All of the extra game pieces had to be wrapped in batting and secured in the box, and when all was said and done, it had to pass the "shake test." I'm happy to say it's en route to California. ■

For more on shadowboxes, read these articles on the PFM website at www.pictureframingmagazine.com—"Shadowbox Solutions," by Greg Perkins, CPE, April 2002 and "Ain't No Shadows in My Boxes: Regal Framing in an Acrylic Box," by Ira Freinckle, CPE, August 2001.