

Framing Trends for Black and White Photography

by Joshua Gabriel

Black and white photographs have remained very popular since their inception roughly 150 years ago. Perhaps Robyn Pocker, co-owner of J. Pocker & Sons put it best, “Black and white photographs give people a sense of history.” While photographers, their equipment, and the photos themselves have improved tremendously over the years, so has the overall perception of the work. Black and white photography is no longer simply revered, but displayed—everywhere and in all settings. The ability of this medium to fit many decorating styles has contributed to its increased popularity. As such, consumers have become more open to alternative, more sophisticated framing designs for these items.

You may have noticed the world-renowned photograph of the Statue of Liberty on the cover of this issue. The shot was taken by New York photographer Ira Lerner on July 22, 1985 during the Statue’s restoration and 100th anniversary. It’s in the permanent collections of The Library of Congress, The Museum of the City of New York, The Brooklyn Museum, and The New York Public Library. It has also been exhibited at the Louvre in Paris and other well-known museums. The moulding surrounding the photograph was chosen for its ability to enhance the



subtle light within it.

This reflects a trend in moulding designs throughout the framing industry—upscale, timeless finishes created to add a sense of value.

“Many black and white photographs command high dollars. With today’s sophisticated buyers it became even more important for manufacturers to create high end black finishes. Our newest designs reflect that demand,” notes Marty Lewis, strategic accounts manager at Framera.

Framera isn’t alone in answering the call. Crescent’s Elizabeth Dow matboard line, which incorporates subtle geometric patterns, also can work well with



black and whites (see bottom photo). Kate McCarthy, vice president of marketing at Crescent, notes, “Most of the line is in black, white, metallic, and shades of grey. Each provides an ideal border for photographs.”

Anti-reflective/museum glass works exceptionally well with black and white photography. TruVue’s director of marketing, Patti Dumbaugh comments, “New glass options have improved

tremendously over the last several years. While etched glass can appear fuzzy when used to frame a black and white photograph, our latest anti-reflective/museum glass allows dramatic images to remain sharp.”

Smart, successful retailers have begun to prosper from increased demand for black and white photos. As the perception and overall value of photography has risen, so has the willingness of consumers to select enhanced framing options. Our industry has responded accordingly. ■

Joshua Gabriel has spent many years in the picture framing industry, the last several focused on marketing. With a bachelor’s degree in business marketing, he has done extensive writing and research in the field.

Editor’s Note: For more on framing black and white photography, read an interview with Jefferson Hayman of Eli Wilner & Co. on the PFM website (www.pictureframingmagazine.com). Hayman talks about his approach to framing his own photography.