

# Shadowbox Solutions: Framing A Tile

by Greg Perkins, CPF

**O**bject framing continues to be a growing category for many custom framers. In recent years, more people have not only become interested in preserving their family keepsakes, but also in putting these items on display to enjoy them everyday. Shadowboxes provide a wonderful way to show and share special memories and heirlooms. When people have things framed with which they have an emotional attachment, it creates something very personal.

As more people have become interested in shadowboxes, the concept has gained additional momentum in the press. It is now common to open up a consumer decorating magazine and see framed objects among the pieces used to accessorize the walls of a room. The point is, more consumers are seeing these ideas now in their everyday lives and they are learning about the possibilities shadowbox framing offers. If you show examples of framed objects and promote shadowboxes in your marketing, you will be more likely to attract this type of business to your frame shop.

The project featured in this article is an art tile. The tile came with its own hanger so that it could hang as a plaque on the wall. It looks nice by itself, but as a custom frame designer I knew it



*This frame design elevates the stature of the tile, taking it from nice to extraordinary. Just by gluing the tile on top of a frame (detail on next page), it creates a dramatic outline that adds importance and helps call attention to the tile.*

had other possibilities. To make a grander statement, I increased its size with a mat and frames. Now, this piece commands more attention on the wall and can make a statement in a room of any scale. If you display framed examples like this in your frame shop or gallery, you'll help your customers visualize the difference a custom frame design can make.

## Step-by-Step Instructions

### The Mat

The mat used for this project has a mottled finish for a painterly look that works well with the tile. The color, while similar to the tile, is slightly darker. This helps to keep attention on the lighter, brighter yellow of the tile. A generous mat border surrounds the tile. It is 4" on each side, and 4½" for the top

and bottom margins. This slight elongation adds stature to the presentation.

The same mat color was also used to create mat strips to line the inside of the shadowbox frame. The purpose of the strips is to keep the glass at the front of the frame and off the face of the tile.

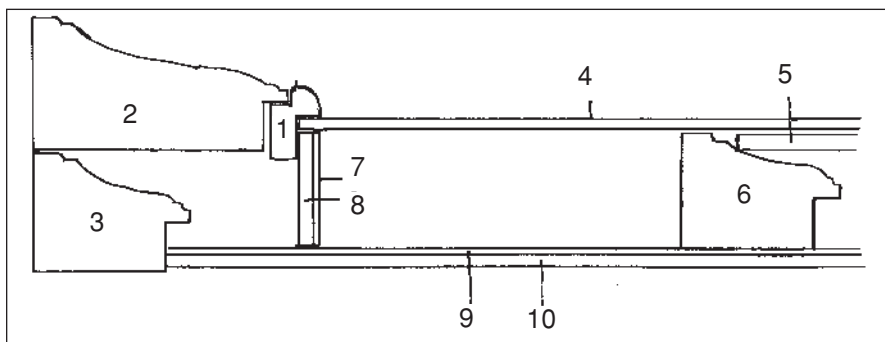
### The Frame

The framing that surrounds the mat is made up of three mouldings. First, serving as a transitional element between the mat and the primary frame, there is a narrow gold moulding. It is a fillet with a ribbed pattern and a mellow gold finish. Next, comes a wider, darker moulding with an aged appearance. These two mouldings do not provide the depth that I wanted to contain the glass, platform, mat, and foamboard backing. Therefore, something was needed to create the desired rabbet depth. The moulding I chose for this was picked so that, as the extender, it would blend with the gold finish on the side of the primary frame.

### Mounting the Tile

After choosing the mat and mouldings, I realized I still needed to make the tile itself more of a focal point. I decided to create a platform out of moulding upon which the tile could be placed, giving it more visual impact. There was a smaller version of the same profile I had selected for the primary frame, so that became my choice for this platform. The use of the same finish on the platform and the frame unifies the presentation.

Rather than actually framing the tile, the tile sits on top of the moulding. In fact, three quarters of the moulding's face is hidden behind the tile. To attach the tile, latex



Materials used in this project—

1. Larson-Juhl Enhancer, 171G
2. Larson-Juhl Athena, 504875
3. Larson-Juhl Athena, 344875
4. Museum quality glass
5. The art tile

6. Larson-Juhl Athena 344875

7. Mat strips: Bainbridge Terra Grotto, 928161
8. 1/8" Foamboard strips
9. Matting: Bainbridge Terra Grotto, 928171
10. Foamboard backing

caulking was used. The small portion that remains visible does a nice job of outlining the tile, quite similar to the way a float frame sets off a canvas. While the outline this frame provides is an important feature, the overall depth of the platform is what makes the tile stand out.

Since the matting would be supporting the framed tile, I glued the mat on top of an 1/8" thick foamboard to make it more rigid. Next, I glued the framed tile to the surface of the mat.

### Glazing

I chose museum quality glass for this project, both for its conservation qualities and also for its appearance. From most angles, the glass isn't very visible, which adds to this particular framing design.

### Overall Design Comments

When creating this frame, my goal was to enhance the tile and have it make a "bigger" statement. Some of the key elements that I think make this design successful are:

- The subtle mottling on the mat and the mouldings contrasts with the singular color used on the background of the tile, thereby setting it apart and calling attention to it.



A moulding was used to "frame" the tile and make it stand out.

- By choosing mat and moulding colors that are all darker than the tile, the tile remains the brighter component, which helps it be seen first.
- The platform the tile sits upon adds a sense of visual weight to the tile itself. This serves two purposes: It helps the tile look more important by increasing its perceived scale; and it also adds mass, which allows the generous mat borders and wider moulding to work well. ■

Greg Perkins, CPF has spent 29 years in the framing industry. He developed a successful retail framing business, specializing in creative frame design. Greg is now responsible for Larson-Juhl's trade show booths and frame designs.

