

Using Trends in Your Mat Designs

by Anne Vazquez



Photos 1a & 1b: The chenille fabric mat on this piece enhances the textures that appear in the artwork. The detail above shows the artwork floated on the mat. (Artist Mary Marks, Publisher Poems)

Being involved in the interior design industry means keeping up with (or perhaps ahead of) the trends of the day. A knowledge of what's hot and what's not benefits the discussion between you and your customer at the design counter. Of course, there are certainly cases where a classic approach is best. This can depend on the type of artwork (a 19th century oil painting, for example) or simply the customer's taste in framed artwork. But the key is knowing what each customer is looking for. If they'd like to emulate some-

thing they've seen in a home décor magazine or someone else's home or office, then offering the trends helps you make the grade (and the sale).

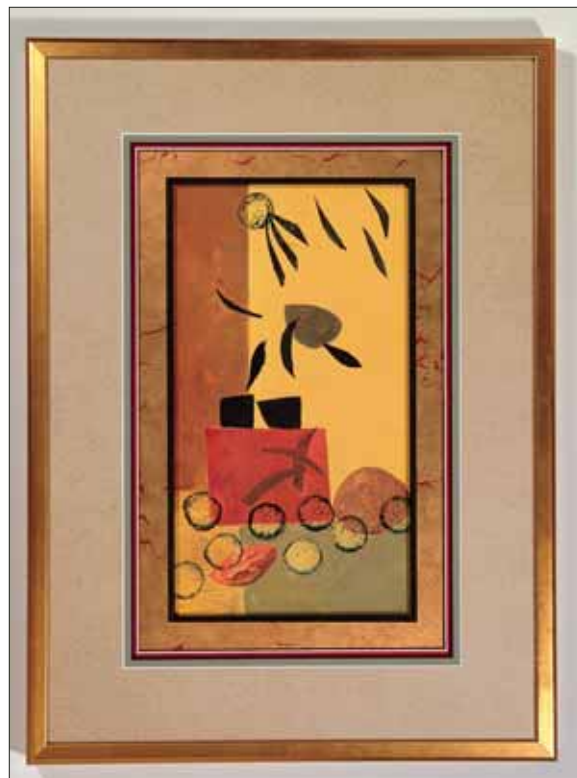
This is not a case of trying to please everyone, all of the time. (We've all heard how impossible that can be.) But you can certainly be aware of what the trends are and whether or not your customers want them. You can introduce your clients to the many ways that their custom framing will look great in their décor. Knowing what will complement the artwork best enables you to

sell matting that gives impact to the entire frame design. Matting is also a relatively easy way to incorporate trends, considering the wide variety of styles available and the various design proportions and openings you can create.

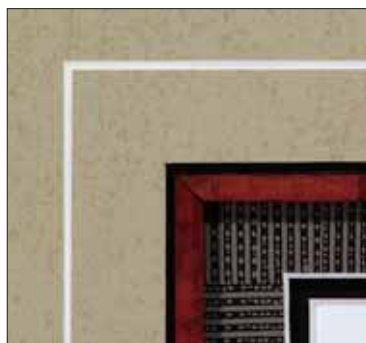
When it comes to matting designs, factors include color, texture, size, and embellishments. Natural hues have been, and continue to be, popular. And while this may bring to mind muted shades, that's not always the case. One look around on a day when "spring has sprung," or a view of a vivid sunset tells us that nature is full of vibrant colors. When framing something that reflects nature, if you look to draw out the brightest colors in the image, you may discover a great match.

Many people are decorating their homes and offices on a global theme. Exactly which theme that is varies by personal preference, but they include Asian, African, European (and the regional subsets), and Spanish influences.

Crescent Cardboard released a collection of matboard that incorporates colors found in various geographic (and sometimes exotic) locations. A variety of greens and blues are present in the Crossroads Collection, as well as purples, yellows, oranges, and browns.



Photos 3a & 3b: the warm colors of the artwork are highlighted by the metallic inner matboard, also part of the Elizabeth Dow Collection.



Photos 2a & 2b: The patterned matboards used in this frame design complement the textures in the artwork. Part of the Elizabeth Dow Collection, the inner mat is Double Cross and the outer mat is Halo.



If you find that bold colors or patterns are not right for the artwork at hand, neutral hues can be a great matting choice, especially since there are more than just creams and whites in this arena. Greens, beiges, and even soft yellows can provide a "quiet" complement. Furthermore, when there are textures on these calming backgrounds, this adds depth to the design.

Reflecting the popularity of Asian influences, as well as universally soothing tones, the Rice Paper collection from Bainbridge offers boards with stripes and woven metallic fibers that can add subtle interest to a frame design.

Artistic Matboard Silkscreened Patterns from Queen City Paper consists of shades of greens, beiges, and creams with patterning that adds texture. Kevin Bain, sales manager of the company's matboard division, explains, "This line provides the subtle look that has become more popular."

Interesting combinations of color and pattern have been introduced in the Elizabeth Dow Collection from Crescent.



Photo 4: Interesting neutrals recently added to Tru Vue's UliMat and UliBlack artboard line.

Beiges, blacks, and metallic tones embellished with various patterning provide matting options with both warm and cool tones for artwork.

And with the mixing and matching of textures in full swing, fabric mats can very often be a stunning addition to the frame design. Whether you wrap your own or use the various selections from suppliers, cotton, suede, leather, chenille, velvet, among others add a dimension to the framing.



Photo 5: The Crossroads Collection features vibrant colors inspired by natural settings around the world.

In Photo 1, a chenille mat from Bainbridge was used to add depth to the artwork. According to the designer, "The shade of the matboard [Storm] provides definition to the art, while the chenille fabric enhances the 'homey' textures featured in the image (wicker, terracotta, fabric)."

The artwork was floated, to allow full visibility of the image, which extends to the paper's deckle edge. To allow a floating treatment and at the same time fully surround the artwork with the chenille fabric, the matboard was scored on the reverse and folded up to cover the frame rabbet.

This piece underscores the visual appeal of textured matboard and the continually growing popularity of real fabric mats that mirror home décor accessory materials. In addition, the dark neutral shade of the mat is a fine example of "neutrals with character"—shades that are subtle enough to be used as neutrals, yet complex enough to have their own color identity.

Fabrics used to accentuate global themes are available from suppliers both inside and outside the framing industry. Framing Fabrics & Moulding International carries a line of Oriental Silks that can work well with Asian-themed pieces, as well as items outside that realm.

Toile is a fabric that is being used in many interiors. While this French linen has been present since its introduction in the 18th century, it's become very popular in North American interiors over the past few years. Often printed on an ivory background, toile designs usually feature nostalgic rural settings or scenes from mythology.

The pattern is usually of one color. However, over time, toile patterns have come to include a variety of background colors, as well as multi-colored patterns and varying themes. The constant, however, is the linen texture and Old World feeling of this fabric.

Matboard wrapped in toile can impart an eye-catching look on artwork. And while this fabric does

hark from centuries past, the eclectic looks so popular today make toile a candidate for use in framing many types of items. Experimentation is key.



Photo 6: The Artistic Matboard Silkscreened Patterns from Queen City Paper put a twist on neutrals.

Specialty papers are also good tools to customize matboard. Whether you utilized pre-fabricated specialty paper mats, or wrap them yourself, the extensive patterns and finishes in today's desired looks add another dimension to your customer's piece.

When looking for the latest trends and interesting ways to use them, consumer magazines about design can both inform and inspire. Check out the artwork in the featured rooms. Take note of what colors and textures are used, and whether it's a traditional or contemporary look. Again, while some customers' preferences will not fit within those walls, many will. And in that case, you will have some insight into what they're looking for.

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Consult PFM's 2002 Annual Directory to find a more complete listing of suppliers for materials discussed in this article.