



How to Frame That Beauty

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*Selected for the CPSA International Exhibition?
Congratulations! Now, here's how to frame that beauty.*

You've just learned that the juror for the upcoming CPSA International Exhibition has selected your artwork. Now you have to get it framed. You recall seeing something about framing in the prospectus, but even given those guidelines, there seems to be a good bit of room for judgment calls. So we thought it might help to clarify some of the terms and options for you.

Frames

The prospectus tells us these should be “simple in design” and that “ornate frames with three-dimensional or painted effects” are not acceptable. While these statements seem quite clear, we have been present as incoming artwork was unpacked, and we know there's a world of options, both good and bad, that fall somewhere between “simple” and “ornate.” Your best bet is to stay as close as you can to the “simple” end of that spectrum. Here are some examples.

Simple frames

Simple frames can still be attractive and interesting:



Simple frames can have some texture and even have a nice fillet (the frame's inner border) often gold, silver, or linen, that is either part of the frame itself or is a small strip that is attached to the frame:



Bordering on Ornate

Some frames may not actually cross the line but are certainly staring the line in the face:



Ornate Frames

And then there are the frames that are the visual definition of “ornate”—fine if you're Botticelli, but not acceptable for the International Exhibition:



Metal Frames

Metal frames are a good alternative and can sometimes be less expensive than wood frames, but some galleries won't accept them because their sharp corners can gouge wooden frames as artworks are moved, installed, and uninstalled.

Check the instructions sent each year by CPSA to all accepted artists for any information about using a metal frame.

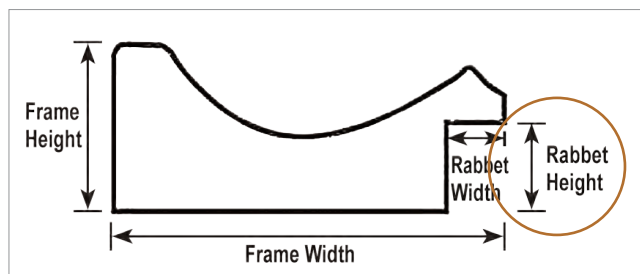


Under no circumstances should you ever use:

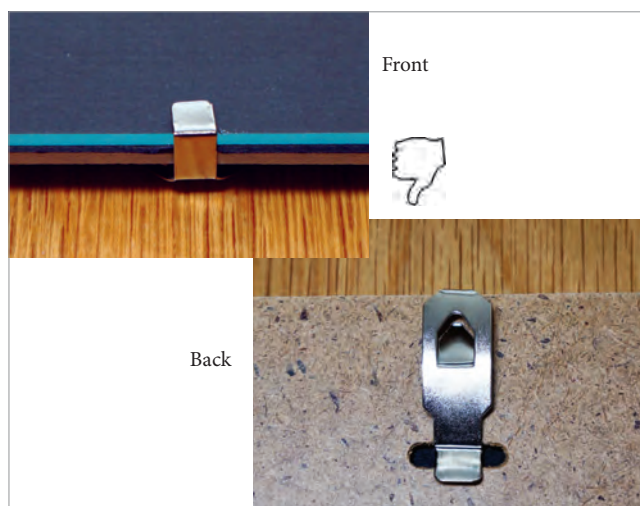
- **Plastic frames!** Don't! Ever! Please!



- **Frames with a rabbet that's too shallow.** The rabbet is the recess at the back of the frame into which you place the package of backing board, artwork, mat, and glazing. Check the rabbet height to be sure it's deep enough before ordering any frame.



- **Clip-on frames.** These frames have four metal clips attached to the backing board, one in the center of each side, that hold the backing board, artwork, mat, and glazing together, with the small tip of the clip visible on the front. And they usually come with glass...not allowed for the CPSA exhibition.



- **Other "Hobby" frames.** These include: frames that have four clips on the backing board that rotate into a groove on the back of the frame to hold the artwork; frames that have cardboard stands attached for tabletop presentation; and frames with sawtooth hangers or small D-shaped rings

attached on the back to the center of two sides for either landscape or portrait hanging.

Hobby frames are not intended for use with professional quality artwork. They cannot be hung properly from any hanging system used by any gallery anywhere, and they will look unprofessional and cheap. In addition, the backing boards provided with these frames are not acid free and will eventually destroy your artwork.

Use of ornate, plastic, clip-on, or hobby frames will disqualify an accepted work from the exhibition.

More framing tips

Whatever professional-grade frame you choose, make sure:

- it harmonizes in both style and color with your artwork.
- it is sized in the same ratio of length to width as your artwork, so that all four sides of the mat are of equal width (although the bottom of the mat may be a bit wider, to add visual "weight").

Frames without mats. If you frame without a mat, make sure the frame is wide enough to let the artwork "breathe." We have seen beautiful work that was crammed into a too-skinny frame so that it looked imprisoned rather than enhanced.

Hanging wire. Hanging wire must be present, securely attached to wood frames by D-rings (or screw eyes if the work is small) placed 2" to 3" from the top, so that the top of the piece will not angle out too far from the wall, and taut enough that the wire will not show above the frame when the piece is hung.



Points. Artwork in wood frames must be secured in the frame with points—small metal wedges inserted by hand or with a point gun—to hold the contents securely in place.



There should be at least three points per side, and more for larger works. **Do not use:** tape, glue, staples, nails, mounting putty, chewing gum, crossed fingers and hope, or anything else to secure the artwork into the frame. Those things won't work and some will ruin your artwork.

(continued on next page)



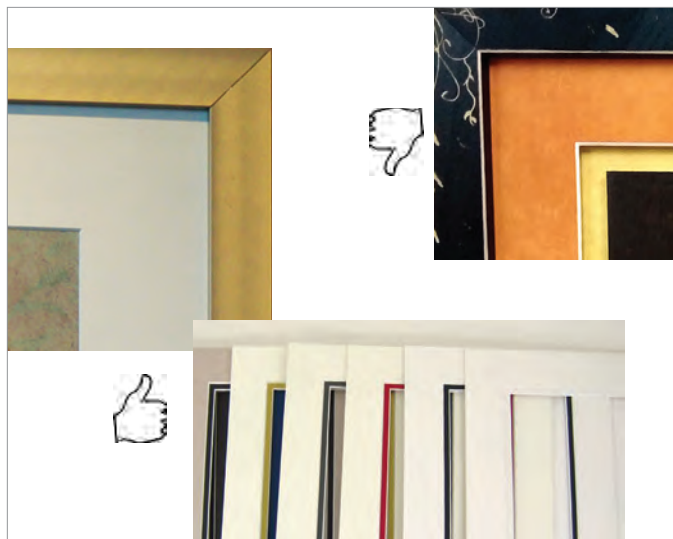
Frame That Beauty...continued

Matting

The CPSA prospectus limits your choices to mats that are “white, off-white, beige, gray, or black.” While those may sound unexciting, there are many beautiful neutrals in a wide range of warms and cools and in many values between white and black that will present your artwork elegantly and help the venue achieve a uniform appearance for the exhibition.

Keep in mind that a mat should never overshadow the artwork. You don’t want a viewer to say, “Wow, that’s amazing! Oh, and look! I think there’s some artwork in there, too!” While many framers will try to talk you into expensive and ornate presentations involving vividly colored mats that they really want to move out of inventory, you must be firm.

You want viewers to focus on your extraordinary artwork, not the quadruple-matted, intricately die-cut confection your framer wants to create. Keep in mind, too, that mats in the “wrong” colors can actually discourage sales, as potential customers evaluate whether the artwork’s overall color scheme will match their décor. (Yes, people really do that.) If you cannot resist the urge to add a color note to your mat, you can get creative with a quarter-inch (or smaller) inner mat, it’s allowed. Go ahead, go wild.



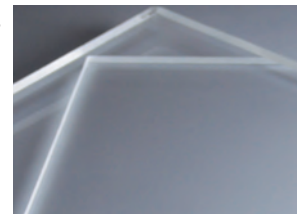
Keep it acid-free

Whether you’re framing the work yourself or working with a framer, make sure only acid-free, conservation quality materials are used. That includes acid-free tape and acid-free mats. Mats that are 100% cotton rag are best, but expensive. However, you can also use buffered pH-neutral (“acid free”) mats, which have had the active acid pulp eliminated during manufacture, or conservation quality acid-free mats which are also lignin- and sulphur-free.

How can you tell? Look at the side of the mat board. If the inner core is light yellow or bright white, it’s acid-free. If it’s a darkish gray, like cardboard, don’t use it.

Glazing

You don’t have to glaze your work, but if you do, CPSA accepts only works glazed with acrylic, such as Plexiglas.™ **You may not use glass.** Generally 3/32” or 1/10” thick, acrylic glazing is available in five types:



- **Regular or basic acrylic glazing** (about 4 cents a square inch) is an inexpensive choice, but it has no ability to filter out harmful UV light, which can lead to loss of color fidelity over time if the pencils you use are not lightfast.
- **Non-glare acrylic glazing** (about 7 cents a square inch) has a slightly frosted or opaque look. It is designed to eliminate glaring reflections from lights and windows that can obscure the artwork underneath, but the slight opacity also blurs the artwork to a degree, unless you place the artwork directly in contact with the acrylic, which is extremely inadvisable. It also has no ability to filter out harmful UV light.
- **Conservation-grade acrylic glazing** or “conservation clear” (about 8 cents a square inch) is a clear layer that uses UV filtering technology to filter out harmful UV light, which can help prevent loss of color fidelity over time.
- **Conservation-grade non-glare acrylic glazing** (about 10 cents a square inch) uses UV filtering technology to filter out harmful UV light. However, it has the same disadvantages that regular non-glare acrylic glazing has, in that the not-quite-transparent surface will obscure the artwork slightly.
- **Optium**, or the acrylic equivalent of museum glass, is slightly thicker at 1/8” and very expensive (about 35 to 40 cents a square inch). It has, however, an anti-static, anti-reflective coating bonded to an abrasion-resistant, UV-filtering acrylic sheet, so that, like museum glass, it eliminates or greatly reduces glare from all external light sources while presenting the artwork through a crystal clear layer of acrylic. From most angles, the viewer cannot tell there’s glazing there at all.

These are your best choices. You are not doing yourself—or your artwork—any favors by trying to cut corners on glazing. The thin and flimsy plastic that comes with hobby frames, typically 1/16” thick or less, is neither acceptable nor advisable. It can tear in transit if the artwork is not properly framed and packed (**see page 26 for advice on how to best ship your artwork**) and cannot perform the basic function of glazing, which is to protect the artwork underneath it for the long haul.

Remember, you spent hours and hours to create your masterpiece, and now the judge has deemed it worthy of inclusion in a major international exhibition. Please don’t scrimp on your presentation! Your work will be hung next to and among works that are all well-framed, elegantly-matted, and professionally-glazed, and, in that company, you want it to stand out—but not for the wrong reasons.