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## Great Framing Design Cues You Can Use!

By Suzanne Gallagher, the Wall Design Diva

Custom picture framing is no small investment, but the value is definitely there if the design is good. Even the U-Frame-It shops, while competitive are not inexpensive. The product selection is endless allowing choices that make our heads spin. Even though custom framing is a fashion business, it is always smart to stay current with design trends but avoid temporary fads.

Given that, it is desirable to frame your precious piece of art right the first time, incorporating the best design possible. Keep the design simple and timeless is my advice, utilizing quality frame styles, and only the mats and fillets necessary to create depth and enhance the art. Avoid over-design of the piece with complicated mat designs that compete with or **become** the art!

This is not to say that the framing design should be boring. By incorporating frame moulding and a mat design that is appropriate and in good taste, you will have not only a beautiful image, but a distinctive piece of art. Try to think of the framing design as the stage for the art. Without it we cannot appreciate the true talent and gift of the image.

There are four **Signs of Bad Design** to look out for, and avoid at all costs!

- **Improper proportion of mat to frame.** Proper proportion is vital in all good design. The width of the mat border should never be the same as the width of the frame. This draws the eye away from the art. The frame should always be smaller than the mat border.
- **Skimpy mat width in proportion to the image.** Generous mat widths are now recommended for even very small images. My general rule is at least 4" of total mat width including multiple mats and fillets. Use wider mat borders to balance the scale of a large room or furnishings. The mat width at the bottom should be slightly wider, (even just .25") than the sides and top to create a classic look and increase perceived value. Dramatic mat design can do wonders for perceived value!
- **Inappropriate mat color or style for the image.** Wrong colored mats are the "death of an image." The border is the dominant element in the design and steals from the quality of the art. Blend the mat to the background to allow the most important elements in the image priority. Neutral mat colors allow the color in the image to stand out. Matching accents in the image with a strong mat color is not a good idea as you see here. However, repeating a color in a second mat can be very effective. Be careful to only do this if it truly enhances the image.
- **Bad choice of frame moulding for image.** Choose frame styles that are in proportion to the weight and style of the art. Pay attention to the period and design elements in the imagery. Think about your space and the relationship of the art to the other elements in the room. Also, when framing set or pairs you may want to use a smaller frame than you would if the art is standing alone. Be careful when choosing color in the frame. Best not to try to match the colors in the image!

You don't have to spend a fortune on custom framing your art to create a space that has charm, individuality, and pizzazz. Balance, proportion and interest are basic principles of all good design and art framing is no exception!. Our desire to achieve excellence in design is one of the many reasons to custom frame. It's all part of creating the Fine Art of Wall Design!

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Visit Suzanne's web site for a free copy of **Hang Your Art, Not Yourself!**

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