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Art and Framing “Sustainability” Check List

By Suzanne Gallagher, the Wall Design Diva

I love to see the return to sustainability and “green” in the interior industry. I must admit that it makes me chuckle because I come from a generation who did the Sustainable/Green thing as a rule. We saved for the things that we wanted and made buying decisions based on long term commitments. No credit cards then! In other words we didn’t buy with the idea that it would be a garage sale or land fill item in a few years.

Because the selection of art is in most cases a personal and often emotional choice, it is especially important to invest in custom framing and do it right the first time. The following tips will be helpful when making those design and buying decisions about framing your art.



- **Begin with an image you love!**

Find something that really speaks your name, rings your bell, and rocks your....whatever! That is to say, when custom framing, make sure that the art image is something that you love and is worth the investment. If it is an open edition print that is somewhat faded, consider replacing the old one with a new print if available whose colors are fresh. Is that old photograph one that should be restored? There are resources who can digitally bring the image back to the original condition. Maybe your limited edition piece has been damaged by water marks from storage in a damp attic. A professional can usually remove the marks and restore it to its original condition. If you are reproducing an original piece of memorabilia, think about resizing it as well. When framing an old newspaper article, you can save the original, but have a copy framed. The scanned piece will be brighter and you can have additional copies made for future generations.

- **Don’t just custom frame the art, preserve it!**

Always ask your framer to use conservation products in your custom piece. That includes rag or acid free matboard and foam core to avoid acid burning of anything on paper. The sad reality is that once damage from UV light has occurred, it can never be reversed. Ultraviolet light rays are one of the most dangerous elements that your artwork can encounter. It will not only cause your colors to fade to a mere shadow of their former glory, but will cause the materials themselves to begin to break down right in the frame. UV protective glass is a must for all items of value. It is the sunscreen and insurance protection for your art and textiles. Museum glass is a new product that has UV protection AND anti-reflection features. It appears to have no glass at all!

- **Look for quality and value in a frame moulding.**

Choose a frame style that is classic but not boring. Avoid something that picks up accent colors in the image. The frame is usually the greatest factor that will determine the cost of your custom framing project. So, you can change the cost substantially by choosing a more moderately price frame. My advice is to go for value without skimping on quality. Frame it once and frame it right.

- **Keep the design classic and timeless.**

Keep the design simple, 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 shown in the image.

Mat Color Tip: When designing for art I always look for elements in the image that warrant repeating. Please avoid multiple color matching in mat design, however. The mats should never overwhelm the image. Look away and then look back at the design. What do you see...the image or the mat? It is easy to get carried away with the fun choices we have for framing design. Remember that the image is the reason you are showcasing the piece. Now you have a piece of art not just a picture! It’s all part of creating the Fine Art of Wall Design!

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