

## Framing - some useful points and illustrations

The Selection Team needs artists to know when there have been serious concerns with their frames, either damaged or generally not exhibition-ready. We do want your work to be given the exposure it deserves but, in several cases, artists have put their treasured works into frames that are so inappropriate that their work actually suffers - in some cases very badly indeed. A frame is an integral part of a painting and, when suitable, really makes a world of difference and can even enhance indifferent paintings. It is not merely a hanging device for a picture.

Eyes should be drawn towards and into a painting, not pulled to the sides by a jarring surround causing a bit of a visual 'barrier'. Examples of these are over-elaborate (Victorian?!) or dark frames, or having a far too narrow mount round a glazed work. For glazed works, you can even give your painting an extra boost by using a double mount which can make a considerable difference and stops work looking flat. Avoid coloured mounts unless you really are keen to hang on to the 1970s days of orange furnishings and avocado bathrooms! Only use in very exceptional cases.

To see what is appropriate to your work, it is essential (and so pleasurable) to look at exhibitions and smart galleries. This can be done so easily on line and a good starting point can be the various societies that are under the umbrella of the FBA at the Mall Galleries - the RBA, RSMA, ROI, RI, NEAC, RP, SWLA and also, for example, the SWA. All have their own websites where you might see photos of their exhibitions, such as of their private views where works on the wall are in the background.

The great news is that places organising smart exhibitions and many galleries have wanted artists to frame their work in what actually costs quite a bit less than frames of a 'fussier' style: simple and fairly plain so that the artwork is the star and customers don't decide not to buy because they would have to fork out for a replacement frame. Some galleries will insist on an artist reframing if it is not suitable as a simpler style means works can be hung much more easily with others. Over elaborate or dark or heavy frames affect works hanging along side them. This simpler preference has actually been around for quite a number of years now.

A point to remember is that, if you don't know what frame your painting needs, your framer might not be the best person for advice. Your framer is probably very busy 6 days a week and might not get time to visit places in order to see what the trends are - a good framer should be looking around, or at least researching on the internet, but so many obviously don't.

Selling to the less grey-haired customer: modern living is full of clean lines and light walls, glass, steel and contemporary furniture, wonderful lighting etc. This is the buying sector and they won't be looking for frames conveniently found in Great Aunt Flo's attic which she kept and left to you in her will, dust and spiders included - bless her.

Some useful links to see frames in exhibitions:

<http://www.society-women-artists.org.uk/annual-exhibition/154th-annual-exhibition.html>

<http://www.rsma-web.co.uk/exhibition.html> scroll down to 2 photos.

Below are very typical frames for oils, acrylics or unglazed media etc. Cheap to make: get them made in plain wood and then paint up with 3 layers of a Farrow & Ball, for example, then add liquid wax and buff up. This sort of framing is so much easier to repair too! Why Farrow & Ball? Well, I find they are best for their chalky matt look and very subtle ranges of colours - expensive paints but a little goes a very long way and the small tester pots are ideal to balance frames on while painting them. Mix tester pots together and make your own colour. To change a colour, use a wax remover liquid and repaint and wax. Easy peasy!



Do you see how the eye is not distracted? It appreciates the whole look and the frame is pulling your eye into the masterpiece which is off set to the best advantage. This wall definitely draws attention to itself.....and look at the red dots!



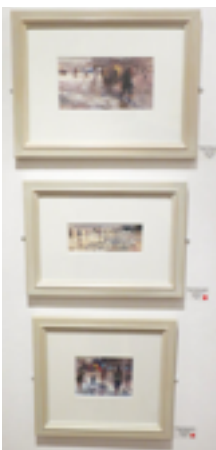
A variety of oil paintings showing how more 'gentle' framing enables works of different sizes, subject and artist can be hung together.



This photos shows one painting with a coloured mount. I wonder whether that colour would suit many buyers' decor. Might the painting look more stunning in a paler (and wider) mount?



Here is a photo of watercolours at the Bankside Gallery, London. Pale is popular!



No narrow mounts here!



Double mounts.

Not only but also: Remember that unframed canvases must be painted to the edges and continued round the sides, or the sides neatly painted in one colour as they are visible to the viewer.

**I hope this helps.  
Framing can be so much less complicated, leaving your brain free to  
create.**

***The article is on our website under Arty Articles for ready reference -  
[www.afas.org.uk](http://www.afas.org.uk)***