

Frame Design



by Greg Perkins, CPF

Stacking: Adding a Custom Touch

Do you offer stacked moulding designs in your frame shop? If you are not familiar with this term, stacking is the technique of combining two or more mouldings to make one frame. Some framers prefer to call it layering, but the word stacking is regularly used in the building and wood-working fields where architectural mouldings are combined.

If you've been able to survive in business without showing and selling stacked moulding designs to your customers, you may wonder why you would ever want to start. It may seem like you will be doubling your workload by having to make all of those extra frames. The

reality is, most stacking is relatively easy. And, while it does involve more work, it is work you are paid for.

The top two reasons to offer stacked moulding designs in your business are (1) higher average ticket and profitability and (2)

increased customer satisfaction. Let's look at each of them.

When you offer stacked moulding designs, you can increase your profit picture in more ways than one. First, you won't have to turn away projects when you don't have individual mouldings capable of fulfilling the project requirements. For example, if a customer brings in an object that's 5" deep and your deepest shadowbox is 4", stacking one frame over another



The combined width of these two mouldings is 5-5/8". If a print of this same image was being framed, the mat and moulding combination would possibly be even wider. This is an original painting and scale adds to the sense of importance.

er enables you to satisfy that need. Without the stacking option, a customer will go to your competitor to find a solution. It is also far more lucrative to be able to sell more to a customer you are working with already than to find another customer and go through the process all over again to sell that extra frame. It makes great financial sense.

There's also higher customer satisfaction. Part of this comes from satisfying clients who no longer need to be turned away because you could not offer them a design solution. Another side of customer satisfaction comes when consumers embrace custom framing and your ability to help them with one-of-a-kind frame designs that enhance their art as well as their sense of style.

Some framers shy away from stacking, thinking it must be difficult. It can be if you get into turning mouldings sideways or backwards, but the

Stacking adds an individual flair to many frame designs, increasing customer satisfaction and improving your bottom line



There are many “cap” moulding profiles of varying depths that have flat tops and work perfectly to extend the depth of shallow mouldings like this one so they can be used for shadowbox framing.

typical way the mouldings fit together is not difficult at all. In fact, most combinations are quite logical in the way they fit together. Generally, the assembly involves glue and either screws, brads, or offsets.

Stacking can create an optimal solution for many everyday framing projects. Some of the most common reasons for stacking include:

- Add Width
- Add Depth
- Mix Finish Colors
- Mix Styles
- Add Strength

Let’s take a look at stacking combinations that fit each of these categories.

Add Width

When you place one moulding around another, you increase the overall dimensions of the frame. This can provide the perfect design solutions in several cases.

1. When your customer’s art is smaller than what would be ideal for their space, you can combine mouldings to increase it to the desired size.
2. Small pieces of art may go unnoticed if they are framed in narrow mouldings. Creating oversized designs by stacking mouldings can provide a grander scale that is sure to command attention.
3. When framing period artwork, your goal may be to recreate the look that was appropriate at a specific



This combination uses a blue frame inside an off-white moulding. Mixing finish colors can also be much more subtle.

time. When the period of the art justifies a big, bold frame, you can combine mouldings to achieve that scale.

Add Depth

The main frame used for the violin would not have been deep enough to frame had it not been for stacking. In addition to using a wider, dark furniture finish moulding and a narrow, reddish moulding inside of it, there is a deep frame placed behind them to serve as an extender. That moulding increases the rabbet depth of the frame to provide the depth needed for the violin along with the glass in front of it and backings behind it.

Mix Finish Colors

When you mix moulding colors to create one frame, it allows you to relate to more than one color in the items you are framing so you can create a highly customized design that is well-suited to the project. Mixing colors is a great solution when framing sports memorabilia or school mementoes. If mixing finishes sounds a bit more dramatic (or gaudy) than the look you want, realize that the mix may be light silver and dark silver or two different wood tones, not just bold colors. Depending on which finishes you mix, the results can be subtle and sophisticated or bright and playful. The colors you can put together are as diverse as the art you will be framing and the customers who bring it to you.

Mix Styles

The eclectic style of decorating is extremely popular



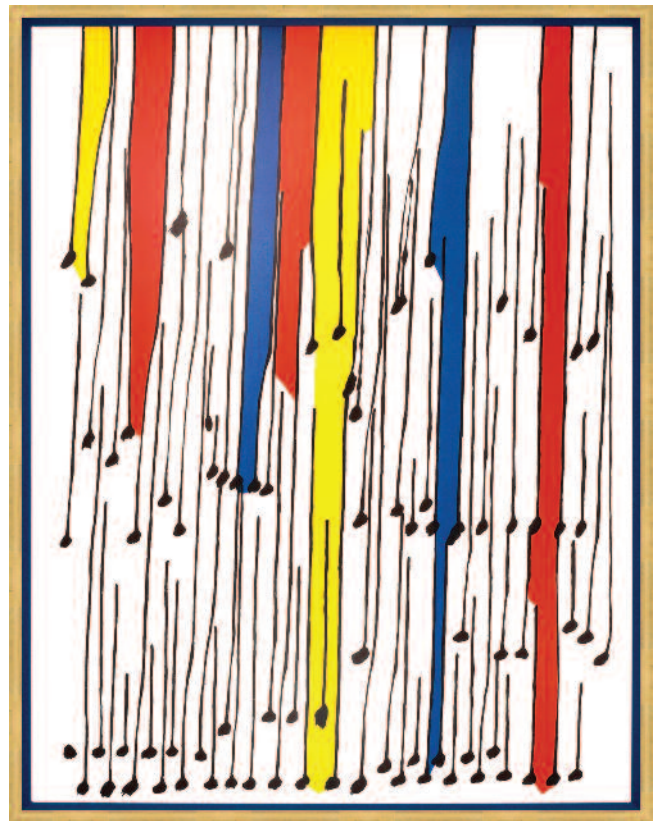
The inside frame here is a sleek contemporary profile with a water-gilded finish. The outer frame is a more traditional profile with an intricate scribed pattern on its front surface. Mixing the styles can add character to your frame designs, making them one-of-a-kind.

today. Eclecticism simply means mixing and matching different styles of furniture. The same people who live with an eclectic decor may enjoy mixing moulding styles when framing for their homes. Mixing moulding styles in stacked combinations is also a good solution when customers bring in something to be framed that is not the style of their home and furnishings. In this case, a frame can serve as a bridge uniting diverse styles. The same is true when framing a group of photos or objects from different eras all in one frame. You can choose a combination that relates to both the new and the old.

Add Strength

Have you ever had a customer who was insistent on using a narrow moulding for a large piece of art? There are those who make that decision to save money; there are also people who are not as concerned with the price but love minimalism and want a frame that is totally unobtrusive. For them, the narrow moulding provides a clean look that suits their style.

Rather than telling them that a frame choice will not work because you fear it can't support the size or weight of the glass and other contents in the frame, you can tell them it will work perfectly if you place a narrow metal frame inside it for support. The metal



The concept here was to use a metal frame inside a narrow wood frame to create a stable structure capable of supporting the glass and other contents in the frame. It can blend in or stand out. Is there for strength but can also add color when desired.

can be a contrasting color, such as the blue inside frame shown, but it can also blend with the desired frame. There are even some narrow profile metal frames that may not even show under the lip of the wood frame.

Your willingness to show stacked moulding combinations to your customers could be the difference between writing up an order or your competitor getting the business. Show some examples of stacking on your framed display pieces. When selling, stacking shouldn't look like an afterthought if it is what you feel is best for the item you are framing. Integrate the concept seamlessly into your presentation so it doesn't appear to be an unnecessary add-on. Once you start selling stacked combinations more often, you will gain confidence and soon it will become second nature. **PFM**

Greg Perkins, CPF is in his 43rd year in the framing industry. Starting out as a retailer, he worked at Larson-Juhl for the 24 years and is now an industry consultant, focusing on frame design and retailing. Greg is also an author, contributing editor, industry educator, and an artist. He can be contacted at gregperkinsconsulting@outlook.com or 770-942-2028.