

Design of the Month



By Michael Fitzsimmons

A Prisma-delic Frame

The saying goes, “If you remember the 60s, you really weren’t there.” Although I was only 10 years old, Day-Glo black light posters were the art statement of my generation, at least in terms of plastering the walls of my teenage bedroom. Apparently, I still carry a flame for psychedelia and fluorescent paint; when I saw the carved and painted design concepts of Prisma frames, I knew they were the ticket.

The Evolution of a Frame Design

But first, a little history. In 1983, I apprenticed as a framer for one week learning the basics of joining, matting, and fitting. The rest of my education was due in large part to articles in *Picture Framing Magazine*, where master framers shared their knowledge.

One of those articles featured a combed paint “faux peacock” finish. This finish is done in three layers, a base coat with any color you wish to show through; next, a clear coat to seal the first layer and this allows for a wash-off of and a top coat, if necessary. The top coat is usually a thick black paint dragged with a “comb” to remove the black and expose the undercoat in a wavy or geometric pattern.

We first used this in our shop on zebra prints. Then we introduced “crayons” similar to coloring a page with random colors and then covering it with black crayon. Scratching a design or drawing through the black allowed the random colors to be revealed. Those frames evolved to what we termed “wavy gravy” to show the spectrum of the rainbow as color goes from ultra violet to infrared. These were used on Peter Max and Grateful Dead posters.

With a general sense of what the frame would look like, I started looking for the right psychedelic poster. In the business of custom framing, we are



A 3" wide Prisma Nouveau panel frame featuring a radiant cascade pattern of yellow-green to blue-purple with rounded corners and a slightly concave profile was used to complement a Vulcan Gas Company psychedelic poster design.

almost always presented with the art first and asked to make the appropriate frame. I like to take advantage of being able to source both the art and the frame when possible, as the whole package is often greater than the sum of its parts. After searching through scores of concert posters, I came across a print of the Vulcan Gas Company poster advertising Shiva’s Headband from April 12th and 13th, 1968. The image was designed by American cartoonist Gilbert Shelton, who also designed the cover art for The Grateful Dead’s 1978 album, *Shakedown Street*. This type of design requires a bit of deciphering even without an altered consciousness, but its main element was the prismatic gradations from yellow to orange to pink and the complementary background gradation of turquoise to green.

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I chose a 3" wide Prisma Nouveau panel frame with a radiant cascade pattern. The Nouveau frame has rounded corners and is slightly concave along the sides, which echoes the psychedelic theme of the art. The frame is made of ¾" clear acrylic, polished and ready to paint. Only the face was covered with paper mask, so any area not being painted had to be masked. The design of the frame has thin, wavy stripes of the cascade pattern shade from yellow-green to blue-purple while the field color of the poster transitioned from purple-hot pink to red-orange to yellow-green. I tried to make the background color match, making it complementary to the color in the typeface design. First, the pattern was painted, followed by the field. The

frame lip was painted last, and black was chosen to provide a break from the high intensity colors and to emphasize the quirky black photo-collage elements in the poster. A final coat of white was applied to maximize the brightness and reflectivity of the fluorescent paint.

The art was dry mounted and fit with UltraVue Museum Glass, which blocks UV rays and provides better light transmission of the bright colors. The frame proved to be the perfect accent to any psychedelic art piece, a tribute to the colorful, trippy times of the 60s. **PFM**

Michael Fitzsimmons is the owner of Westwood Gallery in Westwood, NJ. He began his career as the owner of Frame King in Fort Lee, NJ, and then opened Westwood Gallery in 1999. He has been framing for 33 years.



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

ABC SCHOOL OF PICTURE FRAMING (West Islip, NY) offers a hands-on, 4-day course. One-on-one and advanced classes offered. Visit www.abc-school-of-picture-framing.com or call 800-810-8849.

AMERICAN PICTURE FRAMING ACADEMY 2- and 4-day Basic and Advanced classes feature technical, business and design training. Call 888-840-9605 or visit www.pictureframingschool.com.

ART TO BE FRAMED (Mt. Shasta, CA) is an instructional and educational custom picture framing retreat. One-on-one instruction, beginners through advanced. Visit www.arttobeframed.com or call 530-926-3609.

AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE FOR CONSERVATION OF CULTURAL MATERIAL (Victoria, Melbourne) hosts a 3-day symposium on traditional frames by Degas for artists, historians, and conservators. Contact loubradley@bigpond.com.

B.L. HAYMOND SUPPLY (Ukiah, CA) offers hands-on, one-on-one, 2-day Oil Painting Restoration Workshops with an experienced conservator. E-mail: blhaymond-supply@pacific.net or visit www.blhaymondsupply.com or call 707-462-4221.

CHARLES DOUGLAS GILDING STUDIO (Seattle, WA) offers a 3-day intensive in traditional water gilding with an experienced professional. Call: 206-795-8376 or visit www.gildingstudio.com.

COMPLETE FRAMER'S SUPPLY, INC. (Fort Lauderdale, FL). Call 800-330-3263 or 954-581-2444 to register and for class schedule or visit www.completeframers.com.

FRAME TUTOR SCHOOL (Alberta, Canada) offers a 3-week course (90 hours) hands-on professional training. Weeks 1 & 2 Basic; Week 3: Advanced (Design & Specialties) Call 800-268-0897, e-mail: penny@frametutorschool.com or visit www.frame-tutorschool.com.

GOODISON LECTURE THEATER (London) will host 2-day international conference on the origins of the Auricular style. For information and registration visit www.auricularstyleframes.wordpress.com/about.

JAYENESS MOULDING offers hourly tutoring (3 hour minimum). Call: 206-292-9664 or visit www.jayeness.com.

PRESTIGE FRAMING ACADEMY offers classes. Call 617-285-0855 or visit the website, www.framingacademy.com.

REED'S GOLD LEAF (Nashville, TN) offers 2-3 days Gold Leafing/ Gilding classes by appointment only. One-on-one or max. 2 students. Call Micki Cavanah at 615-294-6113 or send e-mail to rglstudios@bellsouth.net.

SEPP LEAF (New York, NY) offers 1-week traditional water gilding and glass gilding seminar with instructor from Florence, Italy. Visit www.seppleaf.com or call 212-683-2840.

SHUPTRINES GOLD LEAF DESIGNS offers 1-day seminars for artists, professionals/ designers and 2-day gilding and restoration classes. Call: 423-266-4453 or visit www.shuptrines.com.

VALLEY MOULDING & FRAME (N. Hollywood, CA) offers 5-day Basic classes and 1-day advanced class. Visit www.valleymoulding.com or call 818-769-5656.

WEST COAST ART & FRAME EXPO sponsored by Picture Framing Magazine, Jan. 24-26, 2017, at Paris Hotel & Casino, Las Vegas, NV. Held in conjunction with **THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE** seminars and workshops Jan. 23-26, 2017. Call 800-969-7176 or visit www.wcafexpo.com.