

COLOR-DRIVEN DESIGN STANDS OUT AT THE TRU VUE FRAMING COMPETITION

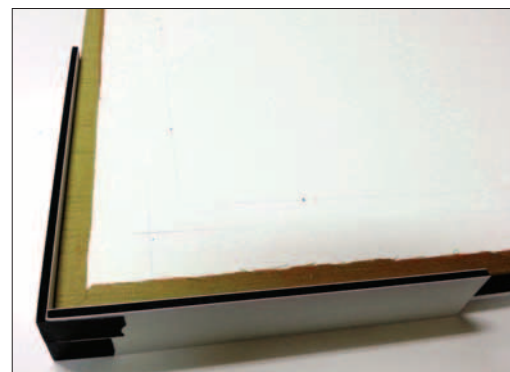
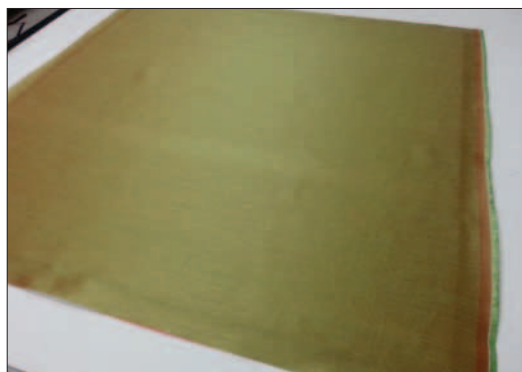
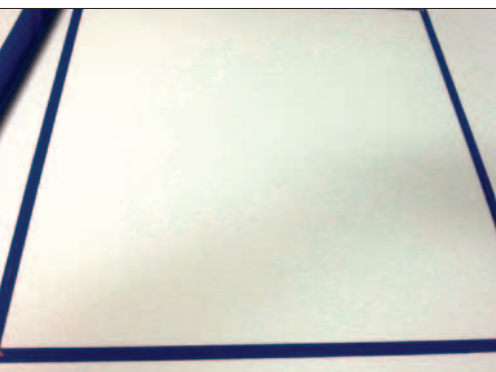
by Donna Erwin

For the 6th Annual Tru Vue Framing Competition, the company went in a new direction. In past competitions, entrants designed a framing package for an item of their choice based on a specific theme. This year, Tru Vue invited custom framers to create framing packages for one of three textile artworks from Chilean artist Andrea Barrios Aguilar. Donna Erwin, of Columbia River Gallery in Troutdale, OR, earned the Grand Prize: Best in Show—Judges' Choice Award for her vibrant design that celebrated the colors of the artwork. Erwin, a past finalist and winner of the Best in Show Award for the 2015 Rethink, Renew, and Restore competition, explains her inspiration for the piece.

Though I have entered the Tru Vue Framing Competition in the past, this year was a

different experience because of how it was structured. With the choice of artwork limited to one of three pieces that varied only in color, it was up to your design and framing choices to differentiate your entry from the rest.

In the past, the Tru Vue competition gave entrants the creative freedom to design a piece limited only by their imagination. My past experiences have given me exposure to many out-of-the-box framers who enter amazing designs showcasing their craftsmanship and creativity. But this competition, with an assigned piece, opened the door to different opportunities and challenges. The pressure on creativity in the design was more intense than in the past because of less variation between each entrant's entire piece. This competition



● Left: The royal blue silk wrapped mat peeks out from under the navy blue liner, leaving the impression of a slender bright fillet. Middle and right: The textured backing fabric complements the green in the art.

had a “real world” feel to it, since custom framers make their living framing items other people choose for them.

An Art-Driven Design

There were multiple directions to go with the design. I had considered doing something with a mirrored surface or even a clear backing, but what ultimately inspired me most was allowing the color and texture of the piece to take the lead.

All three of the textiles featured vibrant color schemes, and I chose the one with variant shades of blue contrasted with a single shade of green. The richness of the colors enhanced the sense of depth and texture of the artwork. The textile inspired my choice of framing materials—not only regarding color, but also in the overall layered effect

of the structure. The triple-stacked frame created a pyramidal shape and allowed for the depth necessary to mount the artwork and give it space within the framing package.

The base of the stacked frames is a large ribbed Max Moulding in blue turned on its side. On top of the blue frame is a smaller version of the same moulding design, but in green. The facing frame was made with a custom-finished metallic moulding featuring both hues of blue and green, pulling the color scheme together. Altogether, this stacked frame is 4" deep.

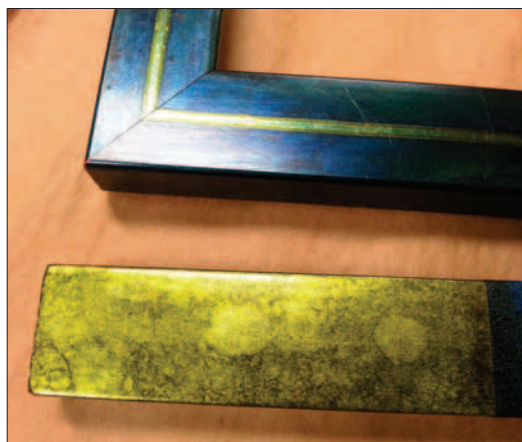
The tribute to the artwork's color scheme continues within the frame. The steep interior sides were lined with navy linen, under the lip of which is a slim $\frac{5}{8}$ " mat wrapped in royal blue linen. To give an impres-

sion of a fillet, I exposed a $\frac{1}{16}$ " perimeter of the vibrant blue. The backing was wrapped in a textured light green silk-like fabric into which the frame of the artwork is screwed. The fabric complemented the raw edges that are part of the visual interest of the artwork's fabric layers.

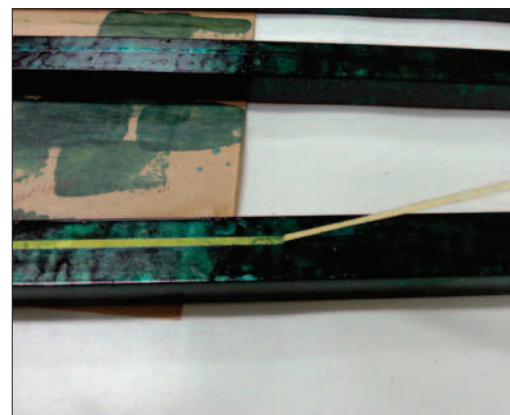
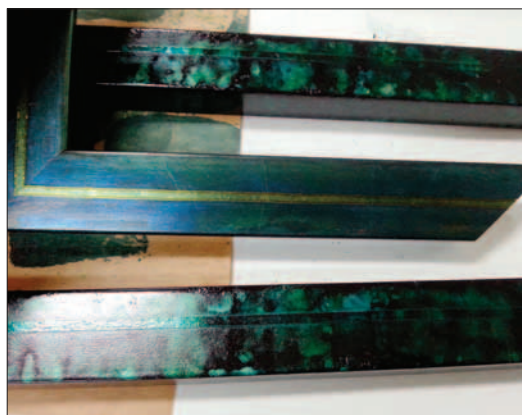
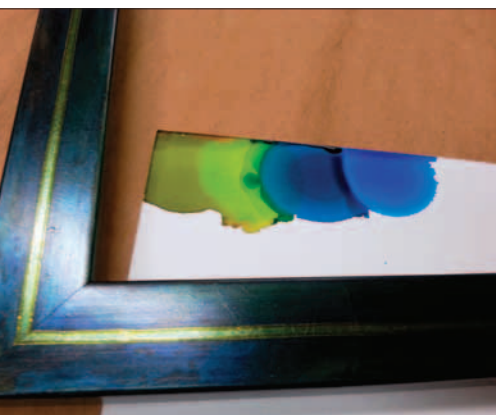
As usual, my entry competed with two very clever and compelling designs. It was interesting to see how different each complete framing package turned out, despite all of us starting with very similar artworks.

Problems and Solutions

It seems that with any competition, there are always challenges that threaten the process. The Tru Vue competition began by submitting a design, three of which were selected for framers to create their



● It was a challenge to create just the right colors for this colorful frame. Unfortunately, the nail polish I tried didn't work. Alcohol paints, however, showed potential. I placed wasabi tape on the moulding for the next step of creating just the right blue.



● The alcohol paints I ultimately used to hand-paint the frame required multiple layers to adjust the blue.

completed piece. I built my design around moulding that had very specific colors, textures, and shapes. When it was time to execute the piece, I discovered the blue Max Moulding product was discontinued. Fortunately, my supplier was able to track down the last four 36" sticks that remained. Because my design required 34" pieces, there was no room for error while cutting.

The face moulding presented an even bigger challenge. The colors and metallic tone of the moulding I planned on using were critical to the design. As I went to order it after learning I was chosen as a finalist, I discovered it was on backorder until a date that was past the deadline for my completed piece. The search for a similar moulding came up with nothing, so my only option was to make

it myself. Starting with a silver metallic moulding in the same shape, I went through several rounds of trial and error to match the tone and color of the original blue moulding with a green pinstripe. The solution involved customizing the colors using alcohol ink, which still required multiple rounds of painting, taping, and re-taping to get the exact right tones.

One of the benefits of participating in a competition is the opportunity to experiment with new design ideas and techniques. Of course, this also leads to challenges that don't reveal themselves until the process is underway. With my moulding sorted out, I began assembling the other components of the framing package, including the fabric-wrapped backing. The texture of the fabric was stubborn, and after having to scrap

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● With my initial choice of face moulding on backorder, the challenge was to create something using hand-painting techniques.



● Designing a framing package for this textile artwork presented multiple challenges—which made for a fun competition.



● The triple-stacked frame is 4" deep.

the first backing board due to warping from the glue, the second still required multiple rounds of ironing and using heated rice-filled cloth bags to get it as smooth as possible. This process required refitting of the piece four or five times before it was completed.

Working with Optium Museum Acrylic

My experience working with Optium Museum Acrylic was limited before this competition, but I quickly learned how

essential the glazing's benefits were to crafting this kind of piece. All the design elements in this piece required a complicated assembly. With so many pieces, it was difficult to line them up properly. Without the product's lightweight, anti-static, and abrasion-resistance features, it would have been a nightmare to handle all of the refittings that were necessary.

While the goal of framing is for it to appear simple as to make the artwork the star of the piece, pulling everything together is a complex process.

The anti-static feature of Optium Museum Acrylic was important for the artwork as well, as the fabric layers featured raw edges with tiny threads that would otherwise have been distorted by the presence of static.

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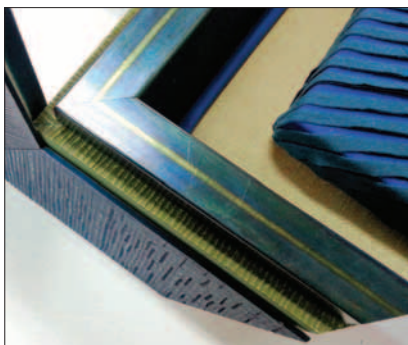
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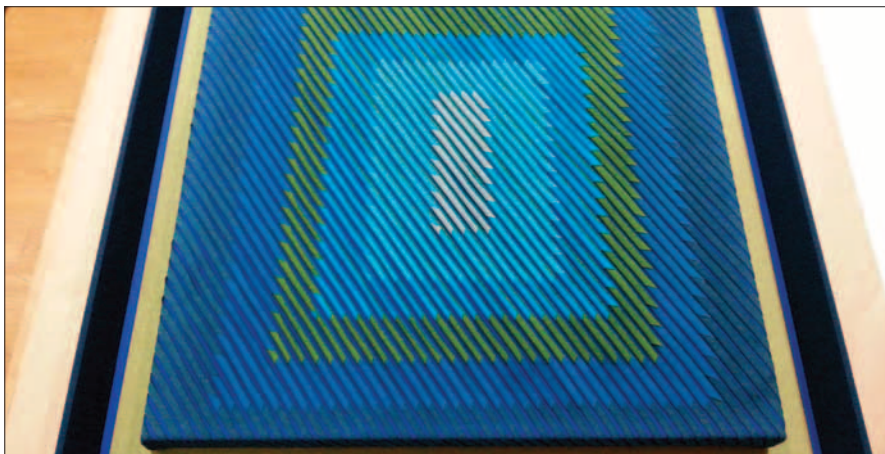
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● Ribbed blue Max Moulding turned on its side and the stacked-frame design helped create the depth needed for the artwork.



● The colors of the inner framing elements mimic those in the textile artwork.

into both the framing package and the artwork itself, seeing a reflection would have made all the work on the details a wasted effort.

While it is a wonderful feeling to be recognized for my framing, the rewards of entering competitions like the one from Tru Vue are about more than just prizes and praise. Having an opportunity to work with

different materials and explore new designs and techniques stretches my skills as a framer. Some of the techniques I discovered during my trial-and-error process creating this piece are things I can use in other projects.

The knowledge and experience I gained from participating in a competition like this is something that will remain with me long after the excitement of winning fades. **PFM**



Donna Erwin

Donna has 30 years of experience in the custom framing industry. This year, she is celebrating two decades as the owner of Columbia River Gallery in historic downtown Troutdale, OR. Columbia River

Gallery offers a wide selection of fine art, photo restoration services, jewelry, and gifts, in addition to Donna's award-winning framing. She is active in the custom framing industry at the regional and national level and a leader in the arts community in Troutdale.



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