

# The Power of Detail: Pattern Matching and Stacked Frames

*These techniques will wow your customers and set you a cut above the rest.*

**H**ow do we, as custom picture framers, stay relevant and competitive in this ever-changing world of disposable, fast, and cheap products? How will we leave our mark? Custom is the key word to our success. Going the extra mile in service and paying close attention to detail with our products is what truly sets us apart.

Many years ago, I framed one of my own needlework pieces in an unusual moulding. The moulding was one I wouldn't ordinarily stock, so I had it cut to size by the vendor. I framed the piece, and it looked nice, but the pattern on the ornate frame was not centered. It was cut from the stick, one length after the next, as expected of a chop from a vendor. This was completely my mistake, of course, not the vendor's, as I should have known better. I should have ordered the lengths larger, or ordered a complete length and cut the frame myself. I didn't, and the mistake was made, but I learned a good lesson.

To this day that needlework, in its irritatingly irregular frame, hangs behind my bathroom door. It is there as a constant reminder to never offer a slap-dash, "that will do" level of attention to detail to my clients, ever. I be-



*This signed photo of Neil Armstrong is surrounded by a custom aluminum-gilt, pattern-matched inner frame and a deep chrome adjoining outer frame.*



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*This eye-catching scorpion piece demonstrates the added wow factor that comes from stacking frames. Additionally, matching the pattern ensured a pleasing symmetry on the outer frame's evenly spaced circular ornaments.*



believe that we as custom framers must at least aim for perfection with our designs.

Here are a few ideas to give your frame designs some “better-than-the-rest” edge.

## Pattern Matching

If your client chooses a patterned, ornate frame, or a frame with evenly spaced stars or ornaments, take a few extra moments and match the pattern if you can. The simplest way to do this is to center the pattern. Don't worry too much about matching the corners; this idea is about getting an aesthetically pleasing symmetry to your frame.

Start with the top and bottom lengths first, and make your first 45-degree cut on a section of the moulding with a reasonably low relief—for example, don't cut through a chunky or ornamental section. Measure and set the stop on your saw or guillotine like you usually would. Slide the length of moulding through to the stop and look to see where the second cut will be made. Is the pattern a mirror image of the first cut? Probably not, so trim the first cut again, and continue to do so until the first cut and the second mirror each other, and then cut your length.

This length of moulding is now the top of your frame. Flip it around and lay it on your saw to use as a guide to cut the bottom length, ensuring the patterns are the same

on the top and bottom lengths. Repeat the process for the side lengths, but don't be too concerned about centering the patterns on the sides; just make sure they are the same as one other.

For bamboo-style mouldings, try matching the corners. Start with the longest lengths first, and cut them to size. Don't be concerned about centering the pattern in this instance. Lay the frame on the work bench. Take note of whether the cuts are on a high or a low section of the pat-



*When matching a pattern, make sure that the pattern on the second cut of your length of moulding is a mirror image of your first cut before using your saw.*



Adjoining stacked frames, rather than overlapping them, allows you to see the decorative outer edges of the frames that would otherwise be obstructed.

tern. Cut the short lengths and trim them until you have corresponding corners to match the long lengths. Cutting a bamboo frame in this manner gives the frame continuity, and shows your client that you've taken some extra care with their frame. Make sure to point this feature out to them when they come in to collect their framed piece.

## Stacking Frames

If you really want to wow your clients, why not try an adjoining stacked frame? Stacking frames together can create attractive and truly unique designs that are well-suited for many different styles of artwork, photographs, and objects your customers bring through your door to be framed.

The traditional method of stacking frames by overlapping can work in some cases, but many frames have beautifully decorative outer edges that are lost when they are stacked in that manner. An adjoining stack frame is a little trickier, but well worth the extra effort when the result showcases the frames in their entirety. This method can also create often much-needed extra rabbit depth.

To achieve an adjoining stacked frame, cut and join the inner frame as usual and match the pattern, if required. Carefully measure the outer edge of this frame, and add approximately 1/4". Set the measurements on your saw to



The clean lines of the matting and outer frame on this custom map piece are carried over into the pattern-matched inner gold frame.



Centering the pattern on this large, ornate frame allowed the entire design to reach its full potential.



What could have been a simple framing job was made spectacular by the use of adjoined stacked frames. Although it takes more time and effort, it's well worth giving your customers this level of design.

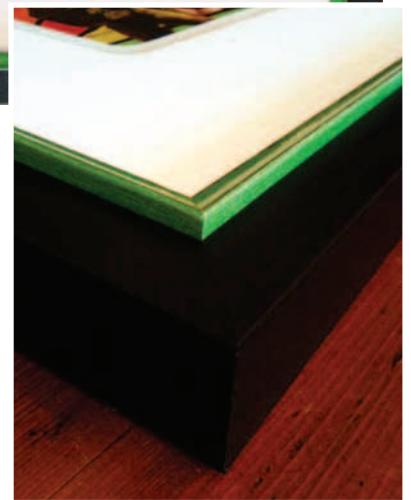
the innermost sight edge of the frame instead of the usual rabbet. Cut the outer frame, but do not join it yet.

Lay the outer moulding lengths flat around the inner frame and clamp it together using a strap clamp. It should be slightly larger than the inner frame. Now, length by length, trim until the outer frame fits snugly around the inner frame. Glue the corners of the outer frame together and clamp until dry. Remove the outer frame from around the inner and v-nail the corners in the usual manner. Finally, join the two frames together using flat brackets; or, for additional rabbet depth, double-holed offset brackets.

Attention to detail is crucial when it comes to standing out in today's business environment. Whether you are aiming to win a framing competition, impress a client with your finesse, or just sleep soundly at night knowing you've done your absolute best, employing techniques like the ones outlined here will only help you achieve success. I encourage you to constantly seek out new ideas, inspiration,



Stacked frames work well on both vintage and modern designs. Here, the adjoined green frame on the inside adds a splash of color to balance out the wider, jet black outer frame. To use this technique, join two frames together using flat brackets, or double-holed offset brackets for added rabbet depth.



and technical skills, and use them at the design counter and in the back room as often as possible. Your hard work will pay dividends when your customers take home something beautiful that they could not have purchased anywhere else. **PFM**

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## When You Hang A Custom Frame On A Length Of Wire Costing Pennies, It Better Be Good Wire.

*It's ironic that the integrity of every custom frame ultimately depends on its least expensive component. Virtually every item commonly used in creating a custom frame cost more than the wire it will hang on. Bottom line – there's a degree of security in knowing the wire you used was the very best. After all, it serves to protect your customer's fine art as much as conservation glass or archival matboard.*

*When your store's reputation is literally on the line, is saving two cents per frame really worth it?*

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