

CREATIVE MATTING FOR TODAY'S CUSTOMERS

*ATTENTION TO DETAIL AND OUTSIDE-THE-BOX
DESIGN IDEAS HAVE EARNED THE STUDIO SHOP
GALLERY A LOYAL CUSTOMER BASE.*

By Kerry Offield

People who come into The Studio Shop Gallery are looking for fine art and custom framing. We're a 110-year-old business known for detail, creativity, creating community through art, and taking on challenging framing projects. After getting to know the culture, I wanted to blend the two things our customers come in looking for: art and framing. My solution was creating a new approach to matting for the art that our clients bring to us.

A regular week sees custom frames for art made by the artists represented by our gallery, historical pieces from collectors and conservators, and excited owners of all levels of experience with art.

We've seen an increase in clients custom-framing event and concert posters over the past few years. We've already framed six Taylor Swift posters so far this year. These clients are looking to bring a unique spotlight to their experience and memory, and they have provided an interesting pool for experimenting with vision, technique, and materials for mat and frame design.

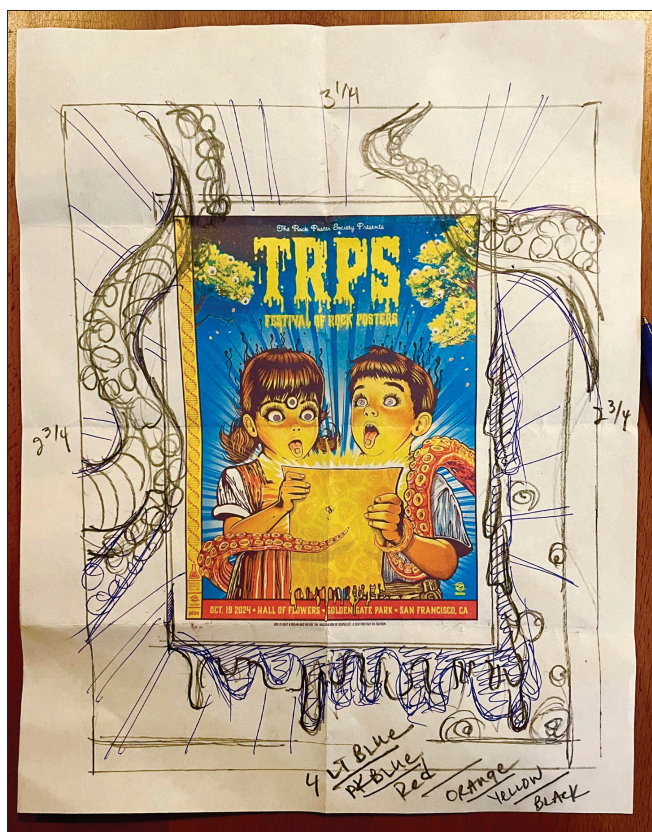
In the Bay Area, we've got plenty of concert and festival poster collectors. We're the home of The Rock Poster Society, and recently the SFMoMA hosted The Art of Noise exhibit that highlighted the history of screen-printed posters. Knowledge of local events, concerts, art, artists, and the value of posters being produced is important to an established and thriving subculture in our area. Musicians, events, venues, and poster creators themselves



● The finished design for a client's poster, which was purchased from The Rock Poster Society's show in San Francisco, CA.



● Deeper colors were chosen for the matting and framing to allow the bright colors of the poster to stand out.



● A sketch of the design and notes about sample colors from the initial consultation with the client.

can all have a powerful fanbase.

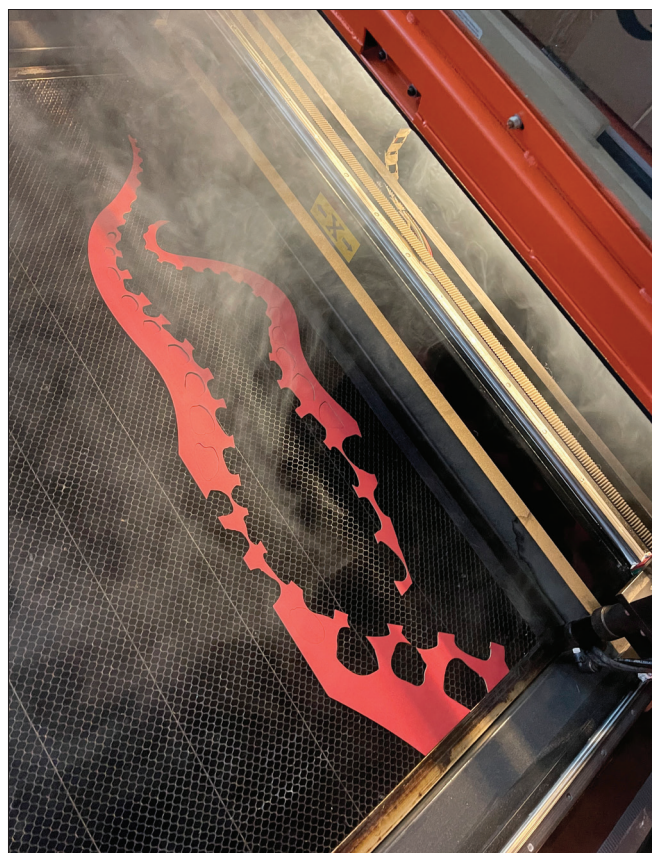
Bringing the same depth of context that historical and in-house artists deserve creates a great opportunity for blending posters with clients' hopes and our tools and abilities. When I demonstrate that knowledge of the art, artist, or value of their artwork brought in—coupled with my understanding of both archival and creative



● Designs are drawn on a tablet in Adobe Photoshop/Illustrator, then each mat layer is drawn in separate files and sent to the laser.

solutions for framing—clients feel comfortable and excited about moving forward with a project.

I got permission to document the framing process for a recent client that came in with a poster special to him. This poster was from The Rock Poster Society annual show in San Francisco. He had multiple poster designer friends showing at the event and it was held on his birthday. During our meeting, the client mentioned two things about his piece a few times, so I knew they were important: he loves the light coming from the center of the piece, and he wants to make sure the date is visible.



● Though these complex mat designs aren't traditional, the shop's methods of archival framing and preservation are.

In an initial meeting with a client, I will talk about the level of detail they're interested in. I will either make a sketch and give sample colors on the spot or work on it for a few days and send them color samples and a sketch. We discuss a base price for the design, and then give a price range for glazing and framing. At this point, I usually ask if the client wants to be included in the design and framing process or if they want to be surprised. Either way, communication is a large part of my process. I like to let the client know how the process is going either by just letting them know I'm thinking of



● Organizing the laser-cut elements and mapping out each color layer was probably the most time-consuming part of this job.

them or I go as far as sending them photos and videos of design components. It's during this part of the process that I get to know people and the creating takes on a personal component.

When this client came in, I had an immediate idea when I saw this piece, so I sketched out a design during our meeting. This isn't always the case; some clients prefer to have a mockup sent to them later on, and still others prefer to be left out of the design process completely. This is why stepping back and listening and feeling out what the client really wants is very important. Ask questions about time and place, where they envision the finished piece going, what they love about it... point out aspects of the art and then listen. Listening is where the connection is built.

Whether we've gotten through a whole detailed sketch or just agreed on an estimate for price and art direction, once the client is comfortable and happy, I start the process with a digital drawing. I use a digital tablet and draw directly into both Photoshop and Illustrator to create the whole design and then draw each mat layer in separate files to send to the laser. Organizing laser-cut design elements and mapping out each

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color layer probably takes the most time.

For this design, I wanted to let the matting sit back and create a subtle glow coming from the poster. I chose deeper colors so the bright colors in the art stand out. I sprayed a gradient on the base mat layers. Once I assembled the base layers and top details, I hand-cut and colored more tiny highlights for the detail layers.

When it comes to mounting, I separate the art from the complex mat design with either a 4-ply or 8-ply rag mat to make sure there's no color or residue transfer and use acid-free backing, archival hinging, and 99% UV-protected glazing. The complex mat designs I create aren't traditional, but the methods of archival framing and art preservation very much are.



● Some of the hand-cut, hand-colored highlight pieces for the detail layers of the matting.

Whether I'm designing classic and clean layered fabric mats for vintage botanical illustrations or hand-drawn, laser-cut mats for concert posters, my approach is the same: develop a relationship with a client, hear what is important to them, listen for what the client may not be able to verbally communicate, understand why they've come in or who they've come in for, stay clear with price estimates, and communicate throughout the entire process. When it's finished, if possible, I always love to go install the piece myself. Above and beyond custom framing ends up being a lot of fun, and above and beyond custom experience is the norm.

As framers, we're all working in a kind of business that's becoming increasingly rare. Standing out as a handmade art rather than a mechanized process, we get to work with our hands to build and create. We work with art and create art. Getting this across to a client, or better yet, having a client that already understands the importance of art preservation and great handmade custom mat and frame design makes for great sales and a great experience.

At least a few times a week I think about how varied and active my days are. We all get to see, work with, and create some pretty cool things. I think that feeling of appreciation and enthusiasm for what I do comes across when developing relationships and working with our clients. **PFM**



Kerry Offield

Kerry Offield is framing manager at The Studio Shop Gallery & Framing. With over 15 years of experience in professional, traditional, and digital arts, Kerry moved to Burlingame, CA, and has been with the Studio Shop Gallery for the past seven years. The gritty, hands-on opportunities found in designing and building physical art are what most interest her curiosities. She loves complex, colorful designs and is very happy to be working with and making art every day.

