



Hanging and Grouping Options

Of the many components for a good frame design, the one that is most often overlooked is a recommendation on hanging and display. In most cases, a client brings in one or more items for framing and has already set aside a place to exhibit the finished pieces. At other times, however, an exhibit area has not already been determined. For both cases, professional framers have an opportunity to advise clients on how to arrange, install, and hang their framed artwork in ways that can provide the final custom touch. A great frame design can have all the proper elements, but if not exhibited properly it can lose the “wow” factor. Here are a number of examples of how to hang individual frame designs or groupings to show off their looks in different types of hanging backgrounds, from textured finishes

to a variety of colored walls. There are also some suggestions on where to hang artwork and at what heights each piece or pieces might be hung.

Office Interior

The first example shows 30 8”x8”

solid color panels framed in a simple 1” brushed aluminum frame. The layout and installation is what made this project work and was as important as the frame design itself. Each panel was aligned in a horizontal format designed around a tall table and four



Thirty 8”x8” colored panels were used to create a horizontal layout, balancing the table and chairs.

The final step of arranging, installing, and hanging can show clients a real “wow” factor in displaying their framed works

bar chairs. The bottom placement line was just 12” above the top of the table and chairs. This helps give a clear, balanced view of the framed artwork. A 1-1/2” space was then placed between each frame, with the table and chairs placed at an angle to give a symmetrical look to the overall installation.

Black & White Home Grouping

Perhaps a client has several pieces of artwork but a small space in which to display them. Grouping framed artwork pieces can be a very effective way of exhibiting several pieces in one location. Several things can be considered when grouping artwork. The works should coordinate and create a balanced look with one another. These designs use mats with

wider borders, such as 4” to 5” instead of 2” to 3”, and have simple frames. Try creating different mat width options, such as even mat widths, weighted bottoms, and narrower sides, tops, and bottoms. These different matting formats help focus attention on each artwork as opposed to being on the many different things going on in an overall grouped arrangement.

The installation and placement of such a grouping is as important as the artwork itself. To achieve a look that helps the artwork stand out, try designing a layout that incorporates items so that the grouping can be placed above a piece of furniture such as a table. Think of a table as providing a weighted bottom for a grouping that gives it support and direction—just as a weighted bottom mat gives to an individual piece of art.

The most important aspect of grouping several pieces of artwork is how they are displayed. Have you ever gone into a restaurant and viewed a so-called grouping of artwork? Most of the time it is a collection of framed junk nailed to a wall. To avoid that look, try to achieve a balanced, coordinated look with a focus on each framed subject. One way to achieve that is to hang each piece of artwork using a “base line” format. A base line is one to which the artwork within a grouping hangs parallel.

In this black and white grouping, the base line is about midway up, from left to right. Each frame hangs parallel to that line. This helps the group maintain a balanced look without taking away from the artwork itself. The odd shapes of each frame are on the perimeter of the grouping, blending into the surroundings. The table and the items on it play an important role in this presentation. The grouping has been arranged with two frames below the base line and three above. The table lamp helps fill a void in this layout.



A black-and-white grouping was placed above a table, where custom accessories and a table lamp were placed to provide visual support and balance for the artwork.



A series of four framed posters were hung with equal spacing to create a balanced yet dynamic wall layout, part of a multi-room office project.

An Office Interior Series

Where do you start when hanging 50 pieces of framed artwork in a corporate office setting? How do you keep everything in balance without looking like it's a collection of artwork hung at random where nothing seems to work? One office project recently offered all of these challenges. The client's artwork was reframed and designed using neutral 12-ply white mats with a white-washed maple cap custom moulding. This enabled each piece to be hung without having conflicts with design factors like color, furnishings, carpets, and textures. With this many pieces, a series of groupings were arranged to accommodate all of the artwork. Larger framed pieces



A textured frame was used to blend artwork with a texturized, colored wall. Placing it next to a customized urn added a classic touch to the arrangement.

were designed for such areas as executive offices and the boardroom.

To create a balanced blend of framed artwork, the group hangings used the base line concept so that all the artwork was hung with a common viewing level to create a smooth flow of grouping presentations. The top of a framed artwork on the left side was selected as the base line point throughout the entire office space. With a wall height of 9', the base line was approximately 6' from the floor. In offices where there were framed artworks of 30" x 40" or larger, minor adjustments were applied to each hanging. Some items were hung individually, including one piece that had a strong contrasting color wall behind it, providing a strong focal point for the framed artwork. The hanging height of this piece used the same base line as the other hangings throughout the office space.

In another grouping, where the base line was also 6' from the floor, two frames on the right were hung at the base line with the remaining two frames spaced proportionally to balance the grouping.

Wall Color & Textures

There is more to hanging a picture than just placing it on a neutral-colored wall. Using color as a background



Artwork hung on a white canvas gallery wall used both texture and color to enhance the frame design. All three frames were hung at the same level to provide balance and focus to the framed pieces.

will often enhance the overall appearance, taking your frame design to another level. Different color backgrounds help accent framed artwork in different ways. Even a gray background can complement art and bring it into focus. If the same piece were hanging on a white wall, it would have a tendency to blend into the mat and frame, creating a very bland look.

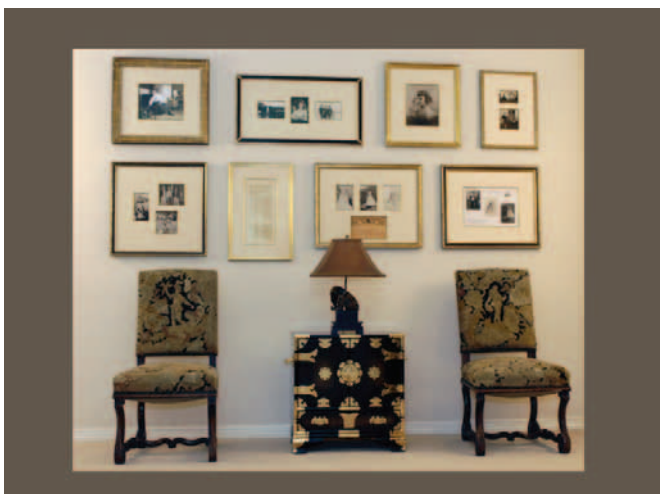
Sometimes a strong wall color, especially a dark earth tone, can create an almost black-and-white effect with the framed artwork. In such a case, using a light-colored mat with a large border can provide breathing space for the artwork and create separation between the wall and the subject matter, enhancing the artwork.

An exhibit wall made from artist canvas painted white can also provide a subtle texture and neutral color as a background. This is more of a gallery look, creating attention to all framing components. When using white as a background for hanging artwork, consider some type of pedestal underneath with a simple vase and a dry arrangement to add a touch of enhancement.

Sometimes customized furnishings can be placed under each frame, with the texture and color of the art picked up in each of the pieces. For example, you might use a frame made of sculptured metal complemented by the wall finish to enhance the artwork.



A grouping of original framed artworks in a recessed wall in a jewelry store uses a contrast with the soft texture of the colored wall to enhance the display.



A grouping of family heirlooms displayed in silk-wrapped mats with 22k gilded frames, each with a different profile, were hung using a base line in the middle to provide unity for the different shapes. The furnishings below add visual support and help complete the look.

Retail Jewelry Store

In a jewelry store project, art was to be hung in three separate recessed areas. One grouping used four original framed art pieces. The base line for all hangings was determined from this center grouping of four. The frame top of the two larger outer pieces formed the base line. This imaginary line extended from one end of the store to the other and was used as a reference point for hanging the frames in the other two recessed areas.

Family Heirloom Grouping

In yet another project, eight frames were used to house family heirlooms. Each had various openings, shapes, and sizes. To create an effective balanced look, several steps were taken. The frame designs were created in 22k gold

leaf with pongee silk hand-wrapped mats. Each photo was reproduced (with permission) in sepia tone on archival photographic paper to give a consistent look and tonal range for each image. These steps were necessary for this exhibit to have solid continuity while maintaining the focus on each photo.

The layout and hanging started with creating a platform beneath the framed heirlooms. Several pieces of the client's furniture were placed in a way that provided the visual support needed by this presentation. As with the previous example, the concept here was to provide visual weight below a grouping, just as a weighted bottom mat gives support and balance to artwork.

Once the furniture was in place, the base line was determined. Various group arrangements were laid out on the carpet to select which one would work best with the furnishings and photos. The base line would be placed at about 66" from the floor, centered on the viewing wall. The base line was at the center of the grouping. The top four frame bottoms were aligned with the base line and the tops of the lower four frames were also aligned with it. A 3" space was placed between each frame and the centered base line. The wall was covered in a hand-wrapped cream linen fabric, giving a soft texture and richness that a painted surface does not have.

Opportunities & Options

These frame designs, hand craftsmanship, and installations are part of the complete frame package. The final step of arranging, installing, and hanging can show clients a real "wow" factor in displaying their framed works. Whether group hanging or single hanging, keep in mind the base line concept. It will help you turn an otherwise cluttered hanging into a balanced wall presentation. The opportunities and options are unlimited. If you're not providing these types of services, start today. You'll be surprised at how they will help your business grow. ■

Tim Franer, CPF, CMG, has framed artwork for heads of state, corporations, galleries, and fine homes for more than 30 years. Tim consults with industry leaders to define color and design, and is a speaker and educator on art, design, and framing. Tim is an instructor of seminars and workshops throughout North America, Europe, South America, Australia, and New Zealand. He is currently development, design, and educational consultant to NielsenBainbridge, as well as consultant to The Fletcher-Terry Co. and Roma Moulding.