

INNOVATIVE IDEAS FOR WALL ART

By Jim Parrie, Ph.D., CPF

Combining creative design concepts with cost-conscious production can provide clients with distinctive yet affordable looks.

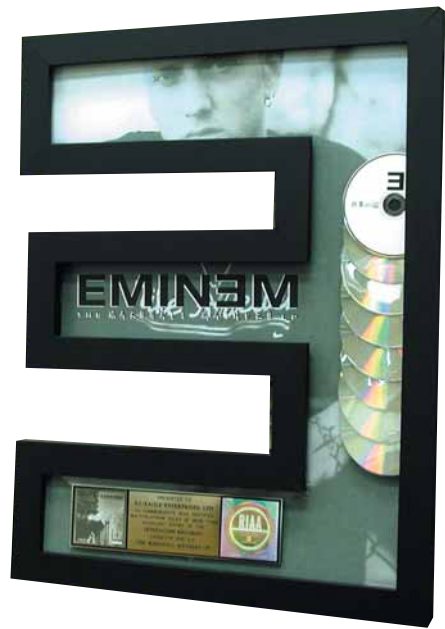


Photo 1: Ill-Eagle Framing in New Jersey used some unusual sources of visual materials in this creative wall art design.

Jim Parrie, Ph.D., CPF, is a 30-year veteran of the framing industry has owned and operated small frame shops, galleries, and wholesale operations to high volume OEM facilities. Currently, he owns Millennial Technologies & Consulting International, a consulting firm to high volume framers, retail chains, and manufacturers throughout the world.

Innovative room designs often rely on unique wall art. Many customers are seeking a certain look or feel that is distinctive. But more often than not, consumers do not want to pay more for a one-of-a-kind item. Developing innovative designs that are moderately priced has always been a challenge but never more so than today.

There are a number of creative options for wall art. Art or art objects used in a design don't have to come directly from conventional art sources, for example. Today there are many sources of art: magazines, digital media, advertising, and more. Even old album cover art can make for a dramatic design.

As shown in Photo 1, designers at Ill-Eagle Framing in New Jersey have taken this form of design to new heights. These innovative designers use album art, CDs, layers of screened glass, and their imaginations to create eye-catching designs at prices that would make Sam Walton envious.

Another example is shown in Photo 2. A demolition team removed this circa 1870 plaster sculpture from St. Joseph's Cathedral in New Orleans, and it was found in a garbage dumpster by preservationists. Once the item was cleaned, it was attached to a piece of 1" plywood covered with Moorman Pearl Suede matboard. This item now hangs over a mantle and is the focal point of a room.

Perhaps more importantly for contract design work, this item also became a prototype for replicas mass produced with resin to reduce weight. These replicas are mounted on particleboard covered with remnant upholstery fabric and surrounded by an MDF frame. The original object was custom framed at a cost of \$850, while the replicas retail for \$250.

A designer may also consider using a giclee on canvas or a canvas transfer. Digital printing technology has improved dramatically over the past few years, making some high quality giclees nearly indistinguishable from originals.

Still another option is using one of the new laminating systems that give inexpensive prints a canvas-like look. These laminated prints can be mounted, stretched, and framed just as if they were real canvas artworks yet cost a fraction of what giclees on canvas cost. This is just the latest option for substituting lower-cost art media of the same or similar image, allowing a designer to achieve the same visual impact at a fraction of the cost.

When a designer encounters a beautiful art object that is too small to fill the desired wall space, expanding the borders can help create an exciting look and fill that space. Borders in this context consist matting, linen liners, or stacked frames to give artwork more visual presence.

By making matting wider or adding layers of matting, a designer can cover more of a wall, enhance the perspective of the piece, draw attention to the colors, and develop the desired feel. Stacking various frames and mould-



Photo 3: This Hawaiian seascape was framed by Pictures Plus by stacking a number of different frames to create a larger, more dramatic presentation of the art.



Photo 2: This 1870 plaster sculpture, rescued from a dumpster in New Orleans, is being reproduced in resin as a way to lower the costs while providing an innovative form of wall art.

ings can also be used to cover more wall area. It also brings exciting colors into view, enhancing the presentation with a special frame design.

One of the most noted and skilled pre-framed art manufacturers that uses stacked frames is Pictures Plus in Hawaii. Their stacked frames (Photo 3) use as many as 10 layers of moulding to create dramatic one-of-a-kind effects for designers. Pictures Plus has developed a reputation as a leader in stacked frame design and have developed a production system and team that understands the intricacies of building stacked frames in large volume.

There are many more options for creative wall art. Some may require additional or out of the ordinary production work to make. A designer can keep the costs of producing such creative pieces under control by talking to the framing company that will make the item. Ask for their opinion on how they would reduce the manufacturing cost.

Whether a designer is selecting a frame for a client or developing a new look, items are often designed in ways that add unnecessary costs. Let a framer provide suggestions on reducing costs, then decide if they will affect the look and the quality of your creative pieces. This will help you provide innovative wall art with killer designs at prices that will make any customer smile. ■

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