

Stylized graphics of Marilyn Monroe and the skyscrapers of New York City were popular motifs in art from several companies, like these by artist Gery Luger from International Graphics.

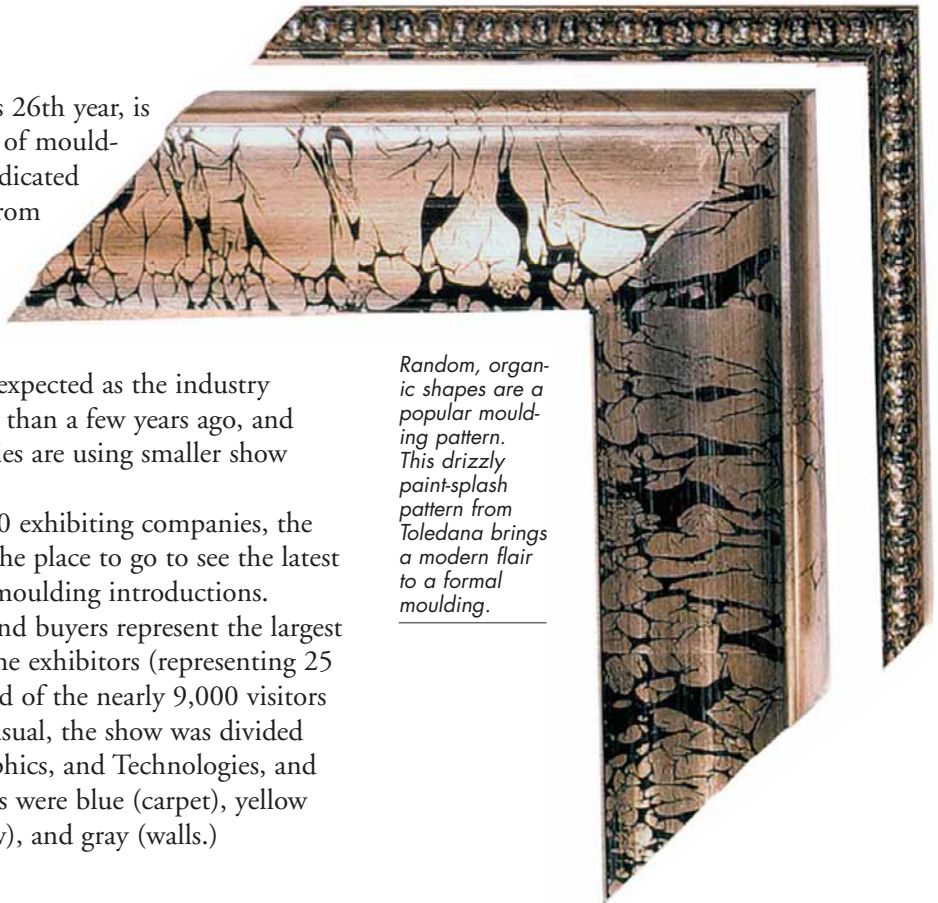


By Vivian C. Kistler,
CPF, GCF

QUADRUM

Quadrum Saca, now in its 26th year, is an important world showcase of mouldings, frames, graphics, and dedicated technologies. Held this year from February 14-17 at Italy's Bologna Exhibition Center, this edition of SACA was a bit smaller than the past few years. But that's expected as the industry includes slightly fewer players than a few years ago, and many cost-conscious companies are using smaller show booths.

Still, there were about 260 exhibiting companies, the show was busy, and it is still the place to go to see the latest and greatest in international moulding introductions. Although Italian companies and buyers represent the largest percentage at the show, half the exhibitors (representing 25 different countries) and a third of the nearly 9,000 visitors were from other nations. As usual, the show was divided into three areas: Frames, Graphics, and Technologies, and this year's striking show colors were blue (carpet), yellow (banners throughout the show), and gray (walls.)



Random, organic shapes are a popular moulding pattern. This drizzly paint-splash pattern from Toledana brings a modern flair to a formal moulding.

One of the pleasures of SACA is the true respect, even reverence, in which moulding design and creation is held. "Walls in Progress" was a big exhibition area displaying only empty frames and framed mirrors from many companies, intended to focus on the unique craftsmanship of picture frames. The frames were grouped by color and style, creating vignettes that let the viewer appreciate the design, color, and texture of each frame. This is the place where moulding makes a fashion statement.

In terms of overall trends in frame mouldings, wide is obviously still very popular, but many new introductions were in the 1½ to 2" range, including lots of flat mouldings with interesting, complex finishes. Texture is loose, with organic lines

Swirl patterns on mouldings in several variations were very popular at Quadrum SACA, as seen in this example from Cavalli & Poli.

SACA 2008

like ripples or interwoven stripes. Smooth finishes with painted or embossed patterns (swirls were especially popular) were an alternative to texture. Black-and-white combinations were seen in several stands.

The glitter of last year was not as prevalent; many mouldings had a paint-splash pattern but it was done with control—dark red or black splashes on silver or gold. A few companies displayed a line of bright colors like lime green, orange, and yellow, but that was nominal compared to last year. The new introductions this year were more on the conservative side, using multiple layers of colors and texturing. Several companies exhibit prototypes at this show; the finishes can be outrageous and get lots of attention for the stand. If a supplier shows interest the company will have plenty of time to make the moulding to order for any supplier wanting the design.

The most obvious artwork trend was large graphics featuring images of Marilyn Monroe, Audrey Hepburn, and the buildings of New York City, often black-and-white and based on stylized photographs. If color was used, it was not to create a full color image but rather to inject a second color throughout or add a colorful background—red or vibrant pink were popular color choices.

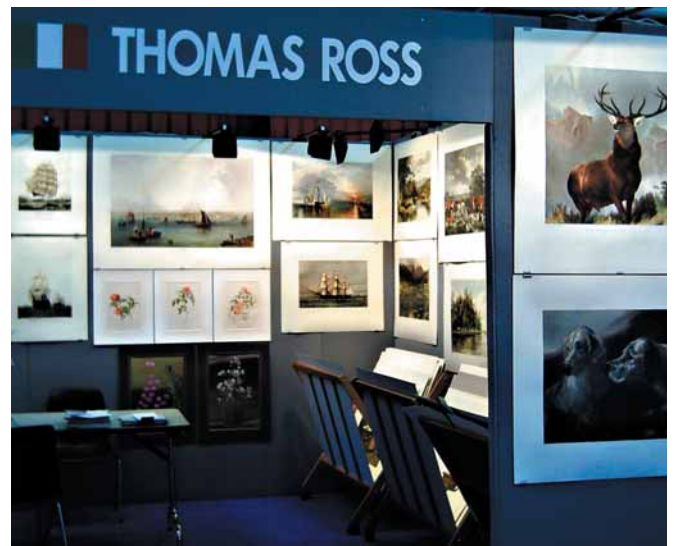
The newest frames, graphics, and technologies were all on view at the major European trade show

Devon Publishing featured the numerous print catalogs it represents, from New York Graphics to Wild Apple, serving as a valuable source in Europe for thousands of images. Although contemporary art dominated the booth displays, traditional art, in the form of oil paintings and hand-colored engravings, has a continuous popularity and is always represented at SACA. Two stands offer antique art on paper, such as bookplates, maps, and original sketches and prints.

In the Technologies section, production framing exhibits are expansive, with suppliers showing machines that can mass-produce mouldings, special types of finishes, and literally any type of job required by a big production facility including packaging. This is a great show for viewing the big machines as well as materials required for hand crafting, such as carving tools, a wide variety of leafing colors, paints and stains, and embossing wheels for moulding profiles.



The weathered surfaces and subtle highlights of color found on antique furnishings from southern France infuse Roma's Cabane Collection. The distressed finish creates a feeling of timeworn elegance that will fit with several of today's styles.



Although contemporary art dominated the show, there is always a presence of traditional art, such as these hand-colored vintage prints from Thomas Ross.



A variety of ornamentation pieces (some finished, others unfinished) can be used to customize frames, as seen in this assortment from Rinaldin.



These mouldings from Albor show several popular trends: ornate and glossy solid colors, gloppy textures, and playful colors like orange and bright pink.

Machines for single frame shops are found in distributors stands, such as Rinaldin of Italy, which provides a catalog in six languages. Lion, a general distributor, exhibited its innovative tools for frame shops. This year Lion introduced a new mat corner caddy, which has adjustable dowels to separate corners in color groups. The AMS (Art Materials Service) stand was constantly full of activity. There were also demonstrations of several machines, including Potdevin's roller gluing machine and rotary press for production mounting of everything from thin paper to fabric, leather, plastic, or wood. AMS also offered "Smooth Glue," a white, water-based paste recommended for use with the Potdevin machine

because of the very thin, even layer of adhesive it provides. The Tensador II was also demonstrated to show stretching canvas on very deep stretcher bars.

Valiani featured its latest line of computerized mat cutters, the Future Line, which includes the GTO, Plus, and Supreme cutters. Bienfang introduced its new roller press, a versatile, space-saving mounting machine that has been very popular in the U.S. It also exhibited a convenient cart for the roller press, which allows it to be rolled beside a 36" high worktable when needed. Fletcher-Terry exhibited its multi-material cutter as well as traditional mat cutters.



The craftsmanship involved in creating frame mouldings is a focus at SACA, from the fine details of hand gilding to mass production using machines. Several booths offered supplies for metallic leafing, available in several versions of gold plus silver, copper, and other colors.



Ornate moulding is always available because there is always a market for it, regardless of the popularity of contemporary styles. But that does not mean it is always the same; there are trends that come and go within the ornate sector. For example, there was definitely an increased use of openwork (decorative loops that includes air spaces) as seen in this example. Courtesy of Quadrum SACA



Inspired by natural materials like bamboo, straw, and rattan, the La Treccia Collection from Roma was created in the spirit of far-off places. This fusion of organic and global influences is the basis for many current designs.

An examination of the international frame and moulding business climate is always a part of SACA, with reports available about imports, exports, and sales. The reports tend to be very straightforward—they do not mince words or try to put a pretty spin on the facts—and that makes the information all the more credible. Ready-made frame sales are up overall, but whether that creates a profit depends on whether a nation is importing or exporting and in what proportion. For example, China is exporting 40 percent of the ready-made frames of the top 50 exporting countries, while importing and selling little. In Italy, however, imports are up significantly and exports are down (although the imbalance has improved from a few years ago). However, this affects mainly the low-end products.

In an interview Pasquale DeStefano, chairman of New Company, the organizers of SACA, noted that big-scale retailers are no longer interested in only the low end of the market and are responding to consumer interest in "mid-bracket" and even luxury merchandise. This is resulting in a general upgrade of quality, sometimes abandoning the low end altogether. DeStefano said, "In Italy, this upgrading process has meant thoroughly rethinking our mission and realizing that low-cost products must be manufactured in China and that you just can't compete with China in that field. However, when it comes to luxury items, we need not fear the competition." ■

Vivian Kistler, CPF, GCF, has been tracking trends for nearly 20 years. As an active member and senior chairholder of the Color Marketing Group, she combines information from CMG, her extensive travels to foreign and American trade shows, and her personal system for tracking trends to evaluate and forecast color and design trends. She is the editor of *Color Names Reference*, which contains 37,000 color names and other information about colors.