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NOVEMBER 2022

Picture framing in focus

A piece of art framed well is a thing of beauty but it takes a lot of thought and care for a stunning end result

ENDLESS OPTIONS There are a thousand ways to frame images, says artist and interior designer Lindi Reynolds. 'Some need mounts, others don't; some require glass, others nothing at all. Then there's the form of the frame itself – they come in all shapes, sizes, colours and materials. There is a highly specialised art to picture framing; my key advice is to find framers in your area and build a relationship with them.' This approach is backed up by Ed O'Donnell, co-founder of Angel O'Donnell. 'A poor job could damage the art or rob it of the authority it deserves. Listen to the advice of your local framer or art gallery. They have a good eye and know how to safely frame a variety of materials.'

BE AUTHENTIC From the perspective of a picture dealer, it's worth trying to ensure the frame is in keeping with the date and style of the image. 'And if you have the original frame, I would try to keep it,' says Harry Moore-Gwyn, a dealer specialising in British art from the late-19th to mid-20th century and who has a gallery in Mason's Yard, London. 'If the artist chose the frame, it's integral to the piece.' When deciding on a new frame, think about the quality of the finish, adds Harry. 'You can really tell the difference between hand-finished frames and machine-made high street versions, which often look too clean and consistent.' For mid-century pieces, consider adding linen or hessian slips to give the artwork space.

MIX THINGS UP You can experiment with traditional oil paintings and give them a fresher look by simplifying the frame shape while retaining the gold leaf, says Victoria Wormsley of French-Brooks Interiors. Sometimes, large Old Masters oils can look more striking and immediate in a modern room with their heavy frames removed completely. Other works, for instance Impressionist paintings, are on the cusp of traditional and modern so you can choose which way to go. Abstract and highly contemporary works are usually better presented in simple modern

frames. Meanwhile, shadow gap frames, which have a simple narrow frame set off slightly from the work, can be very effective on large paintings.

ALL ABOUT THE MOUNT A mount can make a huge difference to the final appearance and there is a variety of options', says Abbie Ireland, director at Patrick Ireland Frames, a specialist in bespoke, hand-finished picture frames. 'Conservation mount boards are the most widely used, while linen mounts add texture and depth to a piece of artwork. For a more traditional look, or when there's a desire for something to look aged or antiqued, gesso is used to create a range of finishes on mount board including combed, distressed, aged and cracked. Finally, wash and line mounts are those drawn by hand to complement the colours of the picture. Once a popular style of mount typically used with watercolours, this seems to be making a comeback.'

TO GLAZE OR NOT Many art forms benefit from being behind glass although when it comes to oil paintings, many agree that oils look better without. Regardless of whether the frame will have glass or not, experts advise avoiding putting a picture in direct sunlight, which can do irreversible damage. This is particularly relevant to works on paper but really applies to all artwork. If in doubt, consider using UV-protected glass or, if the piece is very precious, museum-grade glass, which is non-reflective.

A FEW RECOMMENDATIONS Family-run framer in Kensal Rise, London, Graham Harrison; gilding specialist in Fulham, London, Christina Leder; highly recommended by artists, Geraint Davies Framing in Frome, Somerset; over 60 years of experience at Leverton Framers, Hungerford, Berkshire; for framing and restoration, Piers Feetham Framing, Fulham; and for all-round service, Julian Nicol of Red Dog Pictures & Framing, Somerton, Somerset. 📧

A gallery wall adds instant impact to a room. Mix art media and frame types for a playful, eclectic interior

