

TIPS ON FRAMING FOR EXHIBITION AND SALE by Brenda Innes

During my 20 years of hanging exhibitions in galleries and observing patterns of sales at galleries and art shows I have gathered several tips to maximize your potential sales:

1. Frame **neutrally**, which is different from conservatively. Neutral implies: **a) neutrally toned mounts** - white, off white and creamy tones

b) simple/plain mouldings that don't overpower the work

Why? If you imagine your work on anonymous walls you need to acknowledge the sometimes unpalatable truth that the work must **"match the décor"**! I have seen clients walk straight past very good paintings without acknowledging them or shown them works I know they would like but on asking why they are not enthused their response is invariably "the mount/moulding would not work with the furniture, carpet, wall colour..." Look at the framing of the most successful artists and invariably the works are neutrally framed to maximize the potential sales.

2. **Art Show exhibitors need to be aware of how their painting will "sit" with other paintings before deciding on how the work is framed.**

Consider the challenges of hanging an exhibition so that all artwork is presented as a harmonious whole with all paintings seen and not clashing with other works. As a general rule those paintings that are framed **neutrally** will have a prime position in a show because they will work together harmoniously and have wider appeal to potential buyers. Very individually or vibrantly framed works (including richly toned mounts) will be more difficult to hang for this reason and may not be hung in a prime position for potential sales. Also, make sure the artwork is **clean**: ie. not dusty/dirty and no smeared glass.

3. The best framing is the **framing you don't notice** – a good rule of thumb is if you see the framer's work **before** the artists' it is a failed painting. Remind your framer that you are an artist who is hoping to sell your work and for that reason you don't want the artwork to be 'overframed' or too personalized.

4. Be very careful about the cheaper **timber** mouldings – generally they are the type that has a **"hobby"** artist or **"certificate frame"** feel about them.

5. Never use **linen inserts** for your oil paintings – it is a very dated framing style and buyers may think there is something wrong with a painting they consider has been around since the '70's!

6. **Painting shape** that is slow to sell and doesn't "sit" as well in a show: **wide but shallow in depth**

7. **Traditional** paintings often need only be framed in a **"modern"** manner to appeal to a wider audience.

To achieve this consider: **a)** giving your art **"breathing space"** with **wider mounts** when your work is frame under glass OR neutrally toned slips around your oil painting

b) champagne rather than gold/silver mouldings as they harmonise with both warm & cool toned paintings plus they suit more interiors

c) box frames around oils

8. Unfortunately, as with many things, artists' **can't afford to be cheap** with their framing – it always shows and frankly if the artist doesn't honour/respect the work with good framing then a buyer generally won't either – only those buyers who can sniff a bargain and they are not the preferred purchasers!

9. It is suggested that for works on paper a successful formula is to have **6 standard neutral and contemporary frames**, one each for ¼, ½ & full sheets in both landscape & portrait format to slot works in and out until a work is sold then replace the frame which has been sold. **NB.** As a rule the art show life of a painting is no more than 4 shows without a sale.

10. Develop a relationship with a **reliable framer** whose work is not only **good quality but also reasonably priced** (sometimes artists are able to negotiate better prices for continued patronage or have a financial arrangement whereby the artist has an account with monthly/quarterly payments). Another framing option is to find a framer who works from a home studio – as they do not have the same overheads as a "shopfront" framer their prices are generally cheaper.