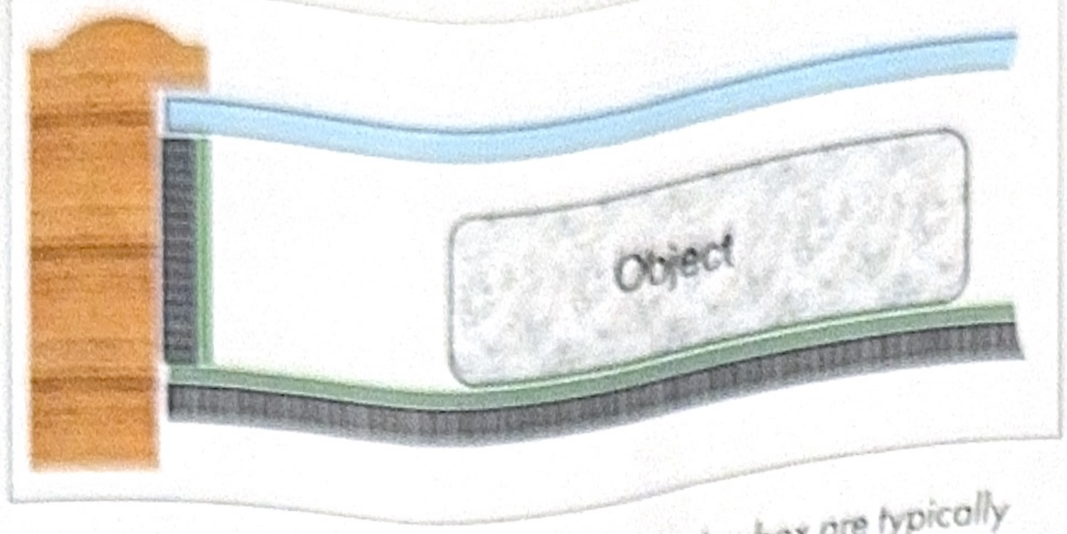


● *The matting and lined sides of a basic shadowbox are typically the same color, though the sides can be a different shade for contrast. Alternatively, white or cream matting offers a timeless, clean look, similar to what one might find in a gallery or museum. To minimize shadows, ensure that the spacing between the object and the side of the frame is at least equal to the depth.*

tively, handmade marbled paper mounted to board can add a striking or classic touch. Since design features on the sides are only visible up close or at an angle, bold designs are less overwhelming—so don't be afraid to go big. Additionally, some specialty moulding companies offer frame liners made from the same woods and finishes as their mouldings, providing an easy way to achieve a highly finished, polished look.

On the technical side, achieving the best results requires careful attention to detail. First, measure and cut with precision to ensure that all strips are a consistent width and meet tightly against the background mat and in the corners. A viewer examining the frame closely should not see any gaps. Additionally, consider future needs, such as a framer who might need to take the frame apart to replace the glazing. The strips must be held securely yet allow for reversibility. Dots of glue combined with a few small strips of ATG (to hold while the glue dries) provide a secure hold while still enabling a future framer to remove the strips without damaging them.



● *Placing the window mat between the glazing and the background offers the benefits of matting while maintaining clear visibility of the object, even from an angle, and allowing unobstructed light. Since this mat is raised over an inch from the background, its sides were lined with matboard. Photos courtesy Tom Adams, CPF, Franchise Concepts*

During the design process, also consider how much space to leave around the object. Light hitting the frame



● *A stacked frame combination featuring a slant or scoop profile, with glazing positioned between the two frames, offers an easy, elegant, and profitable alternative to lined sides. The inner frame can also be replaced with a fabric-wrapped liner for a refined touch.*

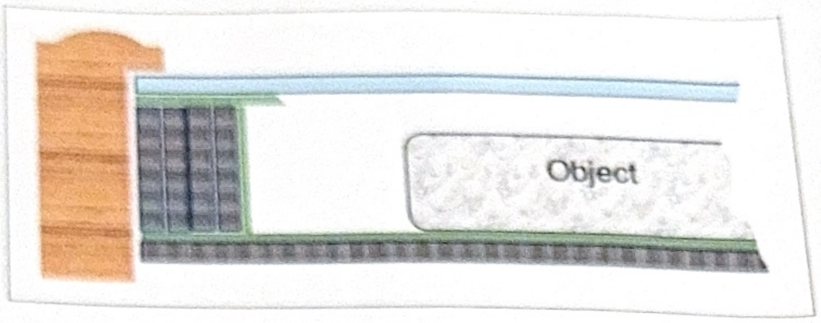
from the side will cast shadows, and if there isn't enough space, the object could be obscured. To avoid this, ensure the space around the object is at least equal to the depth of the frame.

THE MATTED SHADOWBOX

Another option is to add a window mat to the shadowbox. In this design, the mat sits against the glazing at the front of the frame, with the object or objects displayed within the mat's opening. This approach allows for decorative mat treatments typically used when framing other types of artwork. These treatments may include fillets, fabric mats, French matting, creative mat cuts, or gilded bevels, to name but a few. Additionally, the mat can feature window openings to display photos or other two-dimensional items alongside the main object.

An added benefit of incorporating a window mat is that it increases the overall size of the piece—including the glazing and frame—which leads to higher profitability. This design is particularly effective for small objects, as the larger frame enhances the object's presence and helps it stand out on a large or crowded wall.

Constructing this design is relatively straightforward, as it can be assembled much like any other shadowbox, with support for the mat beneath the window



A window mat enhances objects just as effectively as it does artwork. It adds prominence, provides visual breathing room, and creates opportunities to introduce color and profitable enhancements such as fillets, fabric-wrapped mats, and French matting.

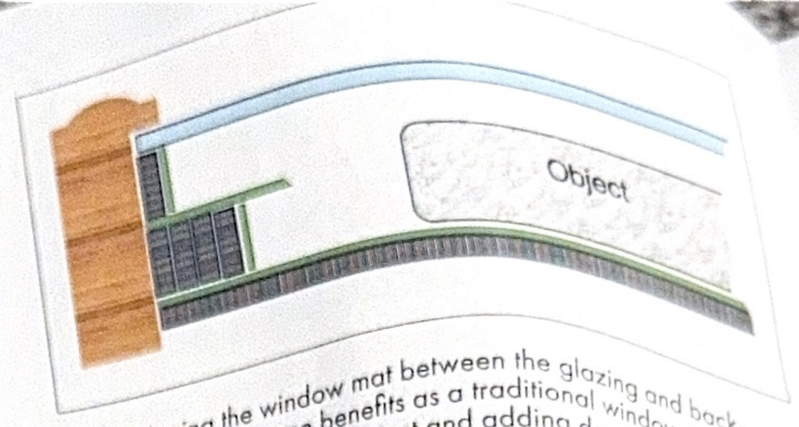
mat, use strips of foam board or a similar material, depending on preservation needs. Take care to ensure that the cut edges remain hidden from view at an angle. If only a layer or two of support is needed, cutting the strips narrower than the mat will help keep the edges in shadow while still providing adequate support. Black foam board is another good option for low visibility.

When the foamboard stack is deep, lining the sides with mat board—similar to a traditional lined shadowbox—may be necessary. Alternatively, fabric, marbled paper, or other decorative materials can create a delightful surprise for viewers who take a closer look.

As with a basic shadowbox, shadows play a critical role when determining the size of the window opening. To allow more light to reach the object and prevent excessive shadows, the space between the object and the mat opening should be at least as deep as the distance from the window mat to the background.

A WINDOW MAT AT THE BACK

A variation of this design features a window mat placed on the background alongside the object, with the frame's sides lined as in a basic shadowbox. This method preserves creative flexibility and allows for upgraded design elements, such as decorative fillets or even a simple 8-ply mat for an elegant touch. By keeping space



Positioning the window mat between the glazing and background offers the same benefits as a traditional window mat while reducing shadows on the object and adding depth and dimension. Smaller objects can also be easily mounted on the window mat for added visual interest.

around the object, the window mat ensures that the frame walls remain farther away, allowing ample light to reach the object for optimal viewing.

Like the previous design, this approach can include additional openings in the mat to accommodate photos or other paper items that complement the main object. These openings could also be used to showcase smaller objects that might otherwise go unnoticed.

Moreover, this design offers an excellent opportunity to experiment with mat colors. The window mat can match the background mat, coordinate with the mat lining the frame, or introduce an entirely different color—adding a layer of customization and creativity to the presentation.



A mat at the back of the frame provides optimum light and visibility while still offering the benefits of matting and decorative treatments such as painted panels and gilded bevels. The sides of the frame are lined, or in this case the depth was created through stacked mouldings. Photos courtesy Jodie Prymke, GCF, Fine Art Framing

A WINDOW MAT SOMEWHERE IN BETWEEN

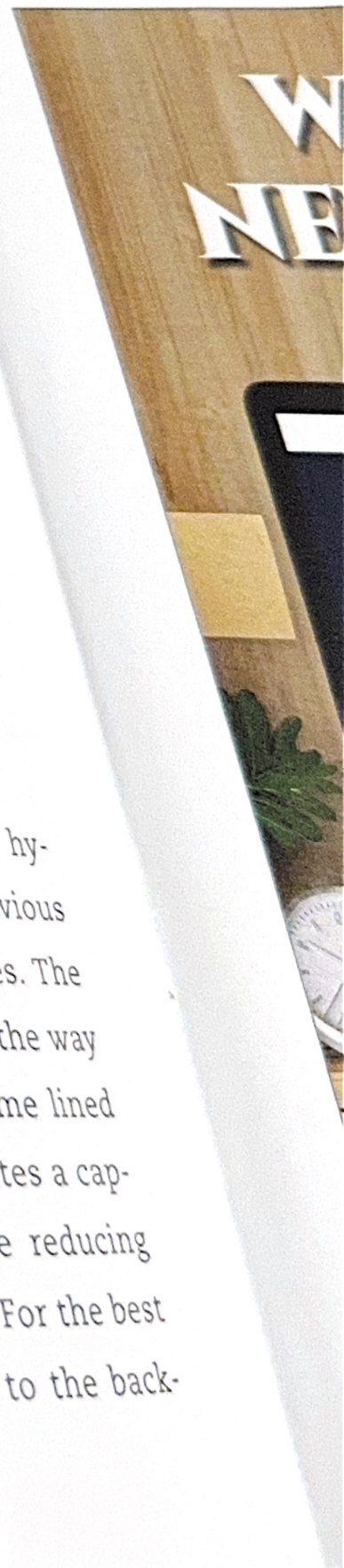
This design is a hybrid of the previous two approaches. The mat is elevated off the background, but not all the way to the glazing, with the remainder of the frame lined as in a basic shadowbox. This technique creates a captivating play of light and dimension while reducing shadows on objects with significant depth. For the best effect, the window mat should sit closer to the back-

ground than to the glazing—ideally around th
point of the object's depth.

Smaller objects can be mounted on top o
to enhance their prominence and introduce
ing interplay of space. Additionally, allow

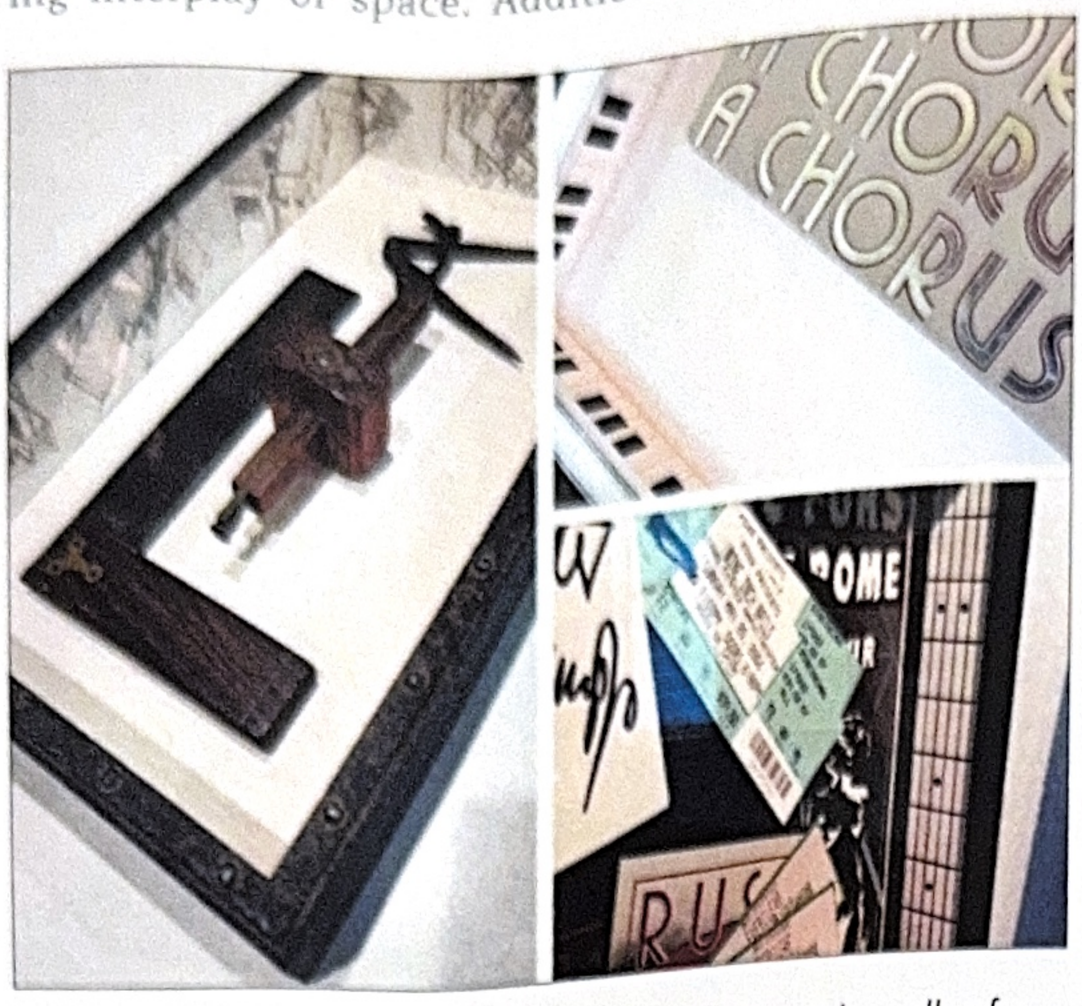


If you have access to scanning
frame offer a unique opportunity
tools, there are still ways to incor
details are only visible up close
bold yet unobtrusive.



ground than to the glazing—ideally around the midpoint of the object's depth.

Smaller objects can be mounted on top of the mat to enhance their prominence and introduce an engaging interplay of space. Additionally, allowing one or more objects to overlap into the mat opening can add a unique and dynamic touch.



If you have access to scanning and printing, the side walls of a frame offer a unique opportunity for creativity. Even without these tools, there are still ways to incorporate creative matting. Since these details are only visible up close or from an angle, the design can be bold yet unobtrusive.

While this design might seem complex, its construction is simply a blend of familiar techniques. The mat is elevated using strips of foam board or a similar material, and the opening is lined if needed. The remaining frame depth is then lined just as with a traditional shadowbox.

We are often encouraged to think outside the box, but when it comes to object framing, thinking inside the box is not only necessary—it can also be inspiring. By experimenting with dimension and making full use of the space inside the frame, from glazing to backing, we can craft artful, creative designs—and have a bit of fun in the process! **PFM**



David Lantrip

David Lantrip, MCPF, GCF, is the director of education for Franchise Concepts, the franchisor for Deck The Walls, The Great Frame Up, and Framing and Art Centre stores. He has served in a number of roles in the Professional Picture Framers Association, including as a member of its international board of directors, guidelines task force, and certification board. David has been a contributor to Picture Framing Magazine and speaker at the WCAF Expo since 2011.





FUN WITH OBJECT FRAMING

Go beyond the basics: how to use space, depth, and other design elements to create unique and profitable shadowbox designs.

By David Lantrip, MCPF

When framing objects, the primary challenges include finding mouldings or creating moulding combinations with sufficient depth, as well as safely mounting the objects. These tasks require both technical knowledge and creativity. However, a third consideration—one that often goes overlooked—is how to bring all the elements together.

While maintaining a certain amount of space between the objects and the glazing is essential, this space can also become our creative playground. By thoughtfully manipulating it, framers can produce unique, eye-catching, and profitable designs.



● *This small souvenir from New Zealand might appear insignificant and lost in a shadowbox without a mat. Adding a window mat not only draws attention to it but also allows for creative expression—in this case, through a fabric mat with a custom cut and a painted bevel. Since the mask has very little depth, only a layer or two of foam board was needed behind the window mat. Courtesy Susan Gittlen, MCPF, Whispering Woods Gallery*

THE BASIC SHADOWBOX

The classic shadowbox typically features deep moulding with sides lined in foamboard and matboard. This approach not only finishes the raw sides and holds the glazing in place, but also creates a rabbet for the contents. It is a basic design, equivalent to placing a photo in a simple black frame with no mats. Done well, though—with a clean frame, neutral mats, and generous proportions—it can offer a timeless gallery presentation, transforming any object into art.

Even within a simple design like this, there is room for creativity. Although the sides are usually lined with the same matboard as the background, that is not a strict rule. Framers can experiment with complementary or contrasting colors, perhaps incorporating team colors when framing a jersey. If your CMC supports it, the sides could be embellished with inked or debossed designs. Alterna-