

Thoughtful Framing Makes a Difference!
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It's not too early to start thinking about the presentation of your artwork for the upcoming Colors of Pinellas exhibition in February 2010. Hopefully, many of you had an opportunity to see the Third Annual show in October 2008, in the Courthouse Lobby, and you might remember that the competition was pretty stiff! There were many wonderful artworks on display by talented employees (and their families) of all ages and levels of expertise. In anticipation of this year's exhibition, how can you make your artwork stand out from all the other entries? Your first goal, naturally, would be to work hard (and have fun!) to produce the very best artwork you possibly can. Your finished masterpiece now deserves to be presented in a professional manner for all to see.

You may remember the old expression, "Presentation is everything," which could apply to a job interview, the fine paper an invitation is printed on, or the speech you may be preparing ... but it also applies to your artwork. Framing your artwork in a way that makes it the most important element in the presentation (and it really is, isn't it?) takes a simple, but conscious effort.

If the cost to frame your work professionally is a burden, you might try one of those "do-it-yourself" frame shops, or a retail store like Home Depot or a discounted coupon for one of the local Arts & Crafts shops-- just make sure you don't skimp on the proper framing materials! Keep in mind that there is no need to "match" the frame or the mat to the artwork, because this method has a tendency to "blend" everything together, and doesn't provide enough contrast between the art, mat and frame. Present your artwork to its best advantage by selecting a white or off-white matboard, preferably museum quality which is 100% rag paper board. Museum-grade matboard costs a little bit more, but is well worth the investment -- because the board is acid-free and will not harm or discolor your artwork, for decades to come. Try to provide "breathing room" for the artwork by measuring a minimum mat border of 3" around all four sides of the artwork. If the work is large, consider a 4" or 5" mat border. This outside length and width measurement of the mat determines the size of the frame you must use.

Start by selecting a neutral frame that doesn't compete with the artwork, possibly a metal or wooden frame. If your art is flat, as in a watercolor, you can purchase a shallow frame where the glass is sandwiched directly against the matboard surface. If

your artwork has some dimension, as in a mixed media collage, you may need to consider a “shadow-box frame,” where the artwork is positioned toward the back of the frame, not touching the glass. If the work is large, it’s best to use Plexiglas, not glass; this material weighs much less than glass and doesn’t break under most circumstances – but be careful because it does scratch easily! Otherwise, framing with glass is fine – but try to avoid “non-glare glass,” even if the framer recommends it. Non-glare glass might sound like the perfect alternative, but it is not as crystal clear as regular glass, and appears “foggy” or makes your artwork itself appear out of focus.

Surrounded by a neutral background, your artwork should “pop” visually to the forefront, and become the most important and prominent visual element within the frame. If you concentrate on presenting your work with a clean, crisp format, then hopefully you will also catch the discretionary eye of the jurors! Either way, you’ll be pleased with the results of your labor. Good luck!