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# FRAMING PICTURES

MYRA B. ZABEL and RACHEL F. MUNSON



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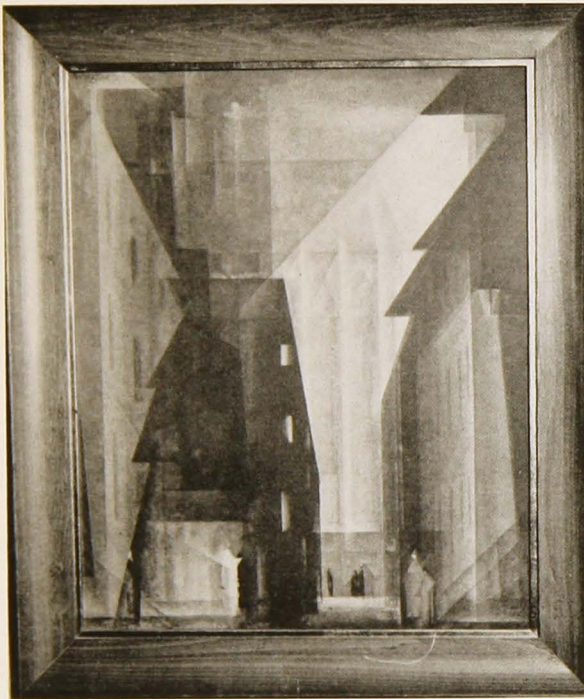


Figure 1.

## *Kinds and Styles of Frames*

A carefully chosen frame is an integral part of a picture, though it is subordinate to it. The right frame will enhance the color, shape, composition, texture, and spirit of any picture (figure 1).

The width and weight of the frame should be consistent with the picture's size and boldness. Small bold oils may require wide frames, but use narrow stripping for small delicate artwork. You can frame most abstract oils with flat stripping or molding.

Picture molding is available in a variety of sizes and shapes—curved, angular, and flat (figure 2).

Molding shape should be considered in relation to picture composition, since it can reflect qualities within the picture. A composition of rounded shapes and forms will be complemented by a curved molding. Use an angular molding for a picture with sharp lines and shapes. A broad open landscape will need a wide, smooth, and simple molding; a deep scoop-shaped molding will confine the picture.

Picture moldings come in many woods. Ready-made oak frames are the most common but are too heavy and coarse for most pictures. Oak and wormy chestnut moldings have a natural texture and color suitable for use with informal and rustic works.

The fine texture and warm color of walnut, mahogany, and cherry make these woods especially suitable for frames. Use them to accent warm orange, yellow, and brown tones or to complement cool greens and blues.

Some commonly used painted frames include white, antique white, and black. Antique white frames are painted white, then intentionally discolored to a buff or gray. The discoloration gives the frame a soft mellow appearance. Use antiqued frames for water colors or brightly colored pictures. Stark white frames are difficult to use and not practical since white paint usually discolors with age. You can use narrow black frames effectively with matted etchings, prints, or drawings.

## *Finishes for Frames*

Clear shellac, which is more durable than wax, leaves wood its natural color. First, apply the shellac. When it is dry, rub the frame with fine sandpaper or steel wool.

Oil finishes are durable and are rich looking on walnut, cherry, and mahogany frames. For an oil

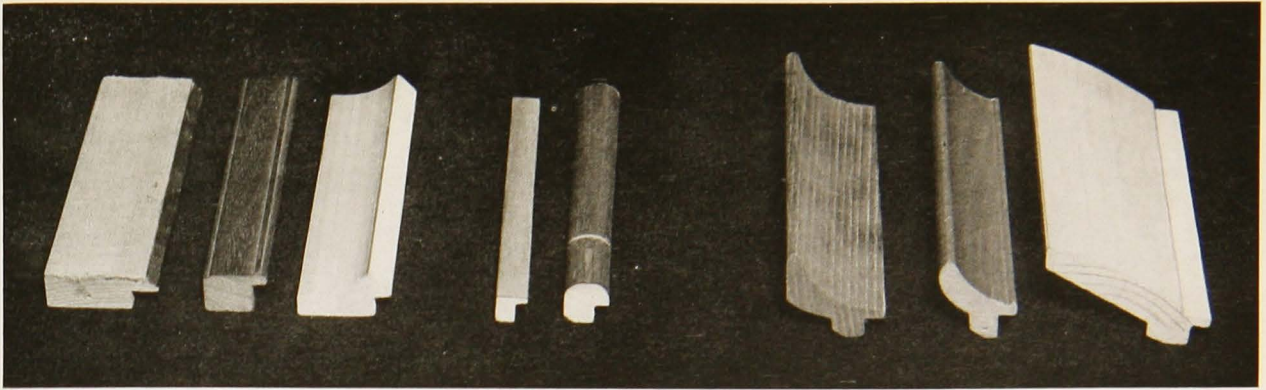


Figure 2. Kinds of molding.

finish, heat linseed oil and turpentine over water, apply, and rub. Many coats of oil and long rubbing will produce a soft dull sheen.

Old cherry, oak, or walnut frames can be restored to their natural grain and color. First, remove the old finish, then sand the frame to smooth away any irregularities.

By applying paint to new or old frames you can obtain a variety of textures and colors. For an interesting effect, thickly applied paint may be textured with the teeth of an old comb or a toothbrush just before the paint sets.

Antiquing is achieved by applying a colored varnish over a light paint. For mellowing white or creamy white, add a small amount of dark brown oil color to varnish. Brush a thin coat of the colored varnish on the frame. Allow it to dry slightly. Then rub away most of the varnish with a cloth, leaving small amounts in depressions and crevices. When completed, the frame will appear aged.

Often, you can make a picture and its frame more harmonious by lightly touching the frame with one or more of the colors found in the painting. Add these colors after the first coats of paint have dried. Cover your finger with a soft cloth dipped into the color to be added. Blot most of the paint from the cloth and work around the frame, leaving touches of color at irregular intervals. Allow each color to dry before applying another.

You can mellow some natural woods by rubbing a color into the grain before you apply the finish. Use oil colors diluted with turpentine; apply with a cloth. Wash away excessive amounts of color with a cloth moistened with turpentine.

By experimenting with color and technique, you can produce unusual and individual frames. **But**—be very sure that the color(s) you add will improve the frame and enhance the picture.

## Mats

Small and medium-sized pictures can take on importance when well matted. Use mats on water colors, woodcuts, and etchings. Do not use them with original oils. Copies of originals should be framed like the original. You may use liners (narrow bands or borders) instead of mats for oils, or use them at the inner edge of both frame and mat if a break is needed between picture and frame or picture and mat.

Use a wide mat for a picture that has decided movement or for one whose lines tend to carry the eye out of the frame. Woodcuts and etchings usually require wider mats than other pictures.

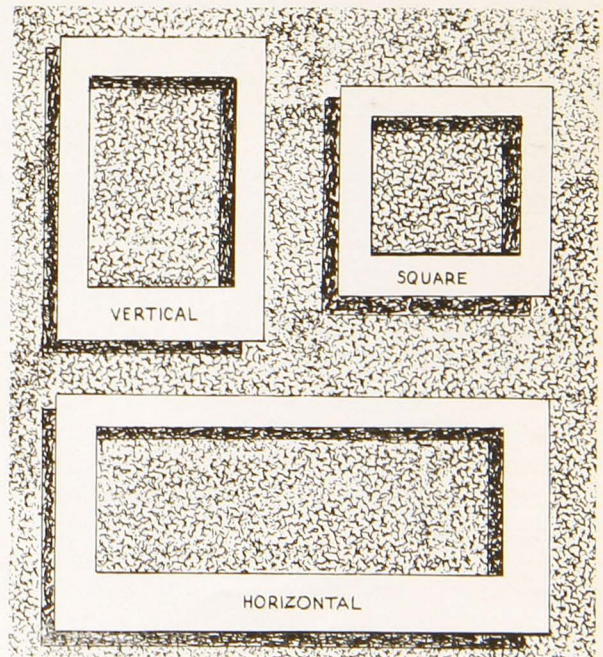


Figure 3. Proportions for mats.

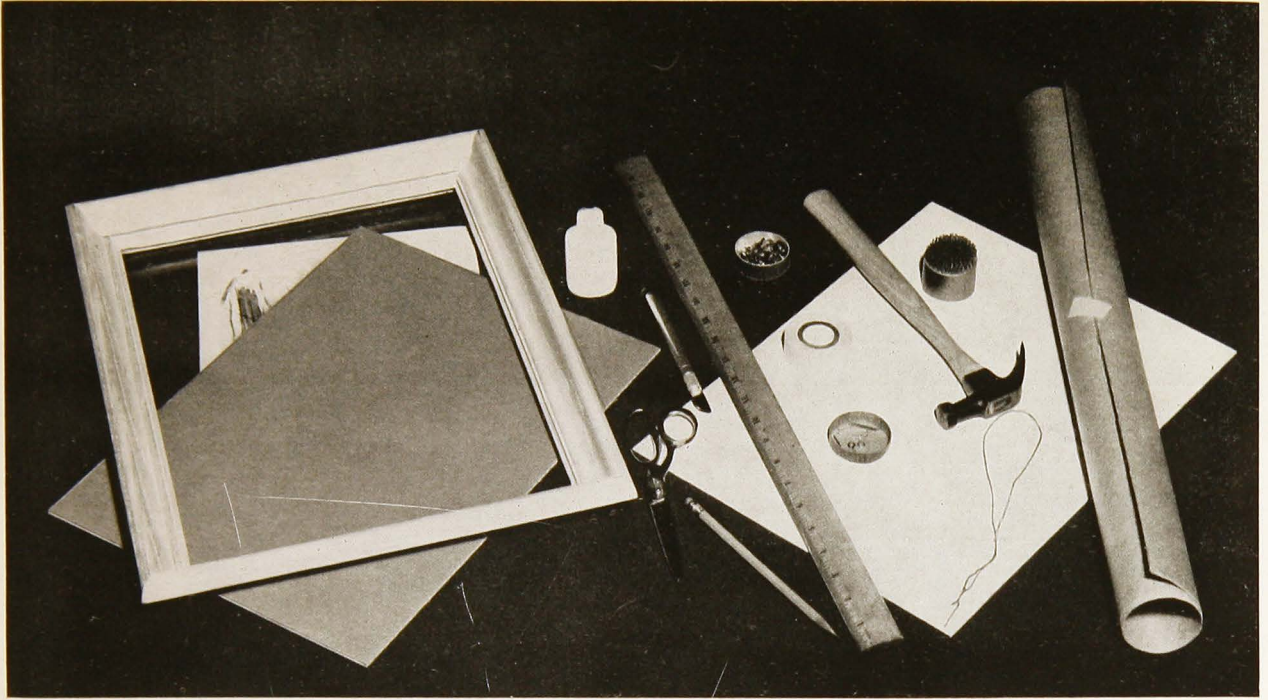


Figure 4. Framing materials.

A wide mat will make a small picture appear larger than it is. Use a wide mat when the subject “fills” the picture.

Mat margins need careful attention. Always make the bottom margin of a mat wider than the top or the sides—such margins will sustain the picture in space. For a vertical picture, make the top margin wider than the sides. For a horizontal one, make the side margins wider than the top. Make the side and top margins equal for a square picture (figure 3).

You can make mats from regular matboard, cardboard, wallpaper, or fabric. Mats may be plain, colored, or textured.

### *The Use of Glass*

Use glass with pictures that cannot be cleaned easily. Good picture glass is thin, durable, colorless, and free from defects. However, you may find glass displeasing because it tends to deepen colors and causes glare from reflected light. You may use non-glare glass but it is considerably more expensive than regular glass and may adversely alter a picture’s appearance. A clear plastic spray will protect many pictures. Always test such a product before using it on valuable works.

### *Framing Supplies*

Art stores and picture framing shops carry mats, frames, and other items you need for framing. If you do your own framing, you will need (figure 4):

- ◆ Frame
- ◆ Glass to fit frame (or plastic spray)
- ◆ Material for mat
- ◆ Cardboard for back (corrugated cardboard is suitable)
- ◆ Wrapping paper for dust cover
- ◆ Screws and lightweight wire
- ◆ Mat knife or single-edged razor blade
- ◆ Metal-edged ruler, pencil, scissors
- ◆ Pins, white glue, masking tape
- ◆ Nails, hammer, thumb tacks, long-nosed pliers
- ◆ Cleansing tissues, soft cloth
- ◆ Clean paint brush for removing dust from parts and rabbet

## Step-by-Step

### 1. Prepare frame.

- ◆ Your frame may need a finish or repair job. If you're using an unfinished frame, sand it smooth and apply a thin coat of paste wax.



Figure 5.

### 2. Cut mat to fit frame.

- ◆ Measure back opening including depth of rabbet (figure 5). Subtract  $\frac{1}{8}$  inch from both length and width to allow for expansion. If you are including glass, use it as a pattern for the outside edge of the mat.



Figure 6.

### 3. Cut mat opening for picture.

- ◆ Decide on margin allowances.
- ◆ Place picture on back side of mat, making sure it is square with the corners. Stick pins in each corner of picture. Lay ruler diagonally across mat, connecting two corners. Move pins  $\frac{1}{8}$  inch in toward center (figure 6). Push pins **completely through** mat. Repeat for other two corners.
- ◆ Remove pins and picture. Inner pinmarks on mat will show cutting corners. On front side of mat, use ruler to make very light pencil lines connecting pinholes (figure 7). These lines will form outline for picture.
- ◆ Protect work surface and assure easy cutting by putting cardboard under mat. Use razor blade or mat knife and metal-edged ruler for cutting opening (figure 8). Practice cutting on a scrap of mat material first.
- ◆ For a beveled edge, cut from front side of mat at a  $45^\circ$  angle. Cut lines slightly past each corner so corners will be square.

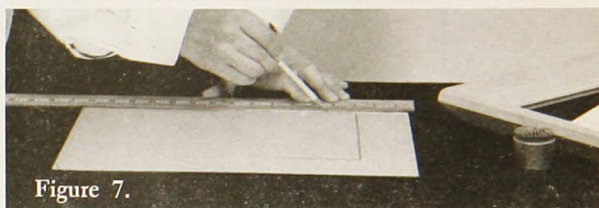


Figure 7.



Figure 8.

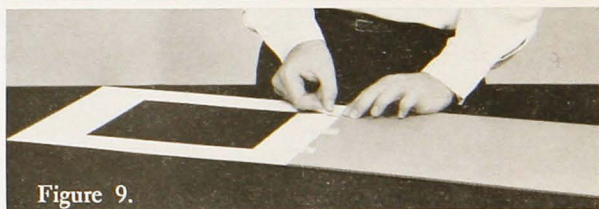


Figure 9.



Figure 10.

### 4. Cut cardboard the same size as mat.

- ◆ Cardboard will serve as your picture backing.



Figure 11.

### 5. Hinge backing and mat at top to form a folder.

- ◆ Turn mat to wrong side and meet with edge of cardboard (figure 9).
- ◆ Use gummed tape to attach the two at top.



Figure 12.

### 6. Tape top of picture to back of mat (figure 10).

*(Step-by-Step continued)*

7. Place ensemble in frame.

- ◆ Spray picture prior to this if you use plastic spray for protection.
- ◆ If you use glass, clean it on both sides and place it in frame first.

8. Insert finishing nails or wire brads in edge of rabbet (figure 11).

- ◆ They will hold all parts in place.
- ◆ On narrow frames, use long-nosed pliers for inserting brads.

9. Glue wrapping paper to back of frame.

- ◆ Apply glue to back of frame along edge.
- ◆ Lay back of frame against slightly dampened brown paper. Smooth paper from center out to all sides. It will become taut as it dries.

- ◆ When dry, cut excess paper away. Fold edge back and cut along fold with knife. Or fold edge down and stroke edge of fold with emery board or sandpaper.

10. Prepare for hanging.

- ◆ Measure about one-fourth of the way down on each side of frame back.
- ◆ Place a screw eye at each point.
- ◆ Cut wire 6 inches longer than distance between screw eyes.
- ◆ Wrap ends of wire through screw eyes twice. Pull ends back and twist around rest of wire.
- ◆ Glue small squares of foam rubber to each lower corner (figure 12). They will keep the picture straight and prevent dust from collecting behind it.

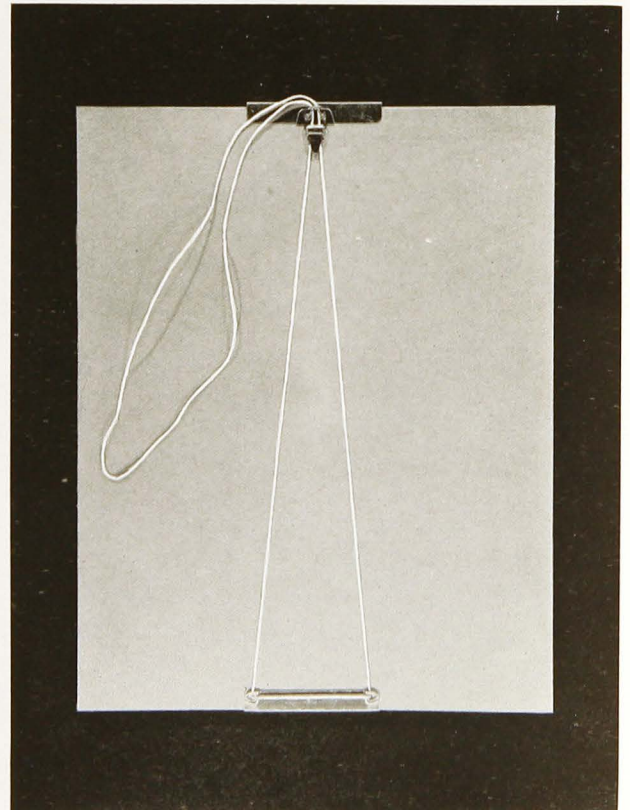
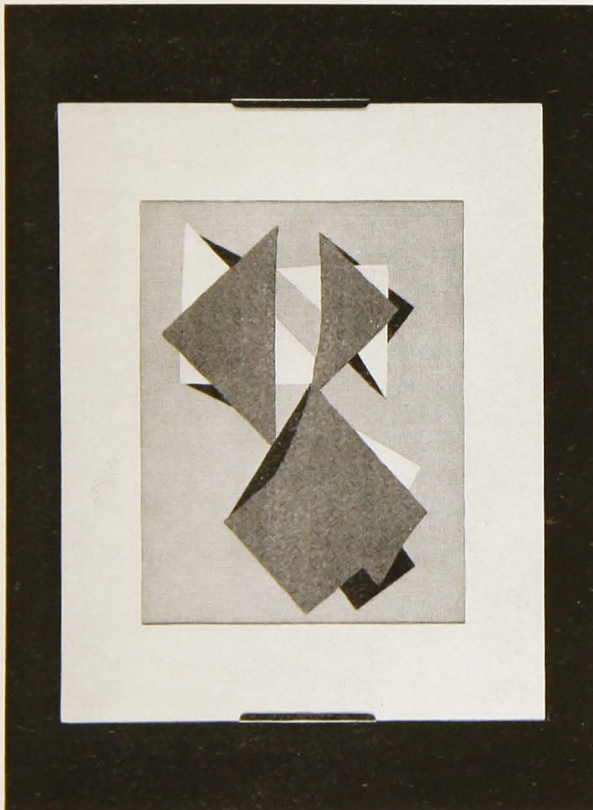


Figure 13. Front and back views of picture with adjustable clips.

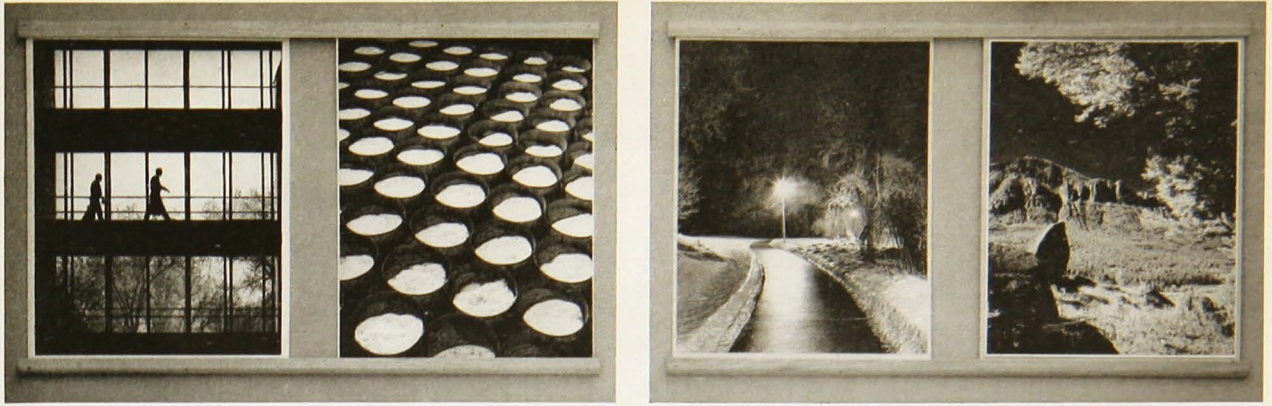


Figure 14. Molding mounted on wall.

### *In Place of Frames*

You can use adjustable clips for hanging pictures (figure 13). Plastic or metal clips are available at art and book stores. Using these, you can hang pictures with or without glass.

Clips are especially good for temporary use or if you plan to change pictures often. If you aren't

sure how you want to frame a picture, hang it with clips until you decide.

Moldings properly mounted on the wall can serve as a frame for one or more pictures (figure 14). This is another picture hanging method that enables you to change pictures often.

## *Evaluate Your Frames and Mats*

- ◆ An appropriate frame lets the picture dominate.
- ◆ Frames enhance the color, composition, and content of pictures.
- ◆ They are consistent in width and weight with picture size and boldness.
- ◆ The proportions of mat margins help sustain pictures in space.
- ◆ A good framing job protects the picture and permits safe hanging.

Myra B. Zabel is associate professor and extension specialist, home furnishings; Rachel F. Munson is instructor and assistant extension specialist, home furnishings. Acknowledgement is gratefully given to Glinda B. Leach and Louise Woodruff, University of Missouri Agricultural Extension Service, for illustrations and basic format used in Missouri Extension Circular 712.

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