

BLACK AND WHITE PHOTOGRAPHY FRAMING

by: Pat Schnurr



A photographer often has a different answer to the question of how to frame a black and white photograph than does the retail picture framer. Often the photographer will select a white mat and a simple, narrow metal or wood frame regardless of what the image is or its overall size. They are even strict about the mats being vertical, regardless of whether the image is horizontal or vertical. For exhibition, class critiques and contests it is a requirement, the idea being that with all the photos presented alike, the uniformity provides a common ground so each photo can be judged equally.

When a photo is framed like art, it gains a sense of value. An appropriate frame design can help an average photo look great.

Black and white photos should be matted with black, white, or gray mats. Any suggestion of colour adds an element that isn't present in the picture. The gray tones in black and white photos diminish the overall contrast, making them less bold and more susceptible to distraction by the foreign colour.

As much as I am opposed to the introduction of a colourful mat, I would be more likely to use the colour as my predominant top mat and place the accent of black, white or gray below it to serve as a transition into the photo. With all that colour surrounding the photo, it isolates the black and white photo, in a sense calling attention to it.

Use the same criteria for selecting mats and molding for photos that you do for anything else. Some of the factors to consider are:

- Overall, is the picture light, medium or dark?
- What is the focal point within the photo?
- What is the style of the photo?
- What is the size of the photo?
- What type of room is it going in?
- What is the colour scheme in the room?
- What is the style of furnishings in the room?
- What is the size of the wall it will hang on?
- Are there any other framed pieces in the room and how are they framed?

A frame is necessary for any picture because it provides the transition between the picture and the wall on which it is hung. The size of a picture, the subject matter, movement, colour, and the medium in which it is done all affect the choice of a frame. One general rule applies to all frames: they must not attract attention away from the picture. Stronger subjects—buildings, for instance—require larger frames than delicate subjects such as children, even though the pictures are of the same size. Simple subjects, such as peasants, require stout plain frames; aristocratic ladies require frames in character; masculine portraits should usually have plain frames; and close-up subjects generally require wider mouldings than distant scenes even if the pictures are the same size.

Picture It Framed is located at 3071 Dundas St. West, just west of High Park Ave. 416-762-1221