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"Float Frame Trends"

Float frames are designed for use with painted stretched canvases as a narrow contemporary outline frame with base support and protection for the painting and most moulding companies now carry a floater line. Over the years the basic undecorated 1/4" float face has evolved into sculpted faces, assorted wood stains and unusual profiles, but even then there is still way more that can be done with float frames making them a very useful profile, becoming a standard on any frame shop sample wall (**photo 1**).

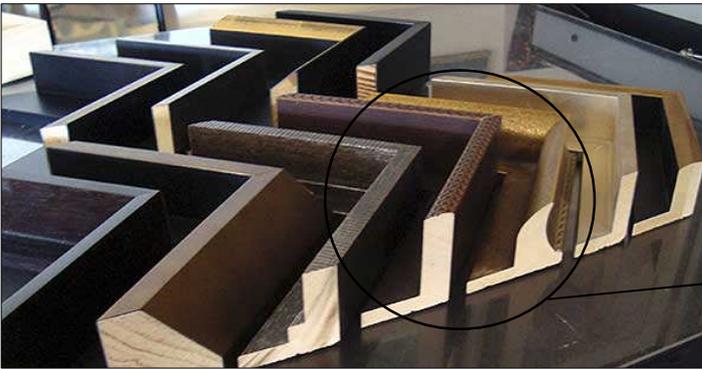


photo 1
Assorted floaters
shown are from
NurreCaxton,
Larson-Juhl,
Universal, Studio,
Omega, Max and
CMI.



Faux Float

Trends in the custom framing industry are sometimes driven by what happens in the wholesale home décor market. Stretched digital canvases have been around for years promoting the gallery wrap as a complete look with no need for a frame. This kept retail prices down and has been a source of frustration for custom framers. More recently the wall décor market has seen the addition of the faux float gallery wrap by simply applying a solid straight panel behind the painting as a Faux Float, giving it the illusion of a simple accent frame. Then by the addition of another small square block the illusion is enhanced to look even more like a multi level profile, while still just being a flat wood strip and block (**diagram 1**).

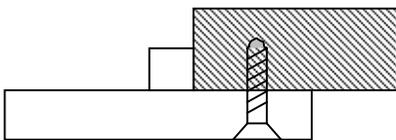


diagram 1
Faux Float + Block
with strainer and small accent block
to enhance the profile

Flat Float

Bringing this concept into the custom frame shop allows endless design possibilities. In addition to fine mouldings already in our industry, both domestic hardwoods—cherry, walnut, oak, poplar—and exotic woods—purpleheart, African mahogany, red oak—may be purchased as unstained 1/2" to 1" thick x 3" wide, length lumber from specialty cabinet companies online like Rockler, or Woodworkers Source (**photo 2**).

photo 2
Unstained, length lumber
from Rockler.com



These may be painted or stained and placed behind an existing float frame to create a much wider and/or colorful presentation as an option for economy minded artists and clients (**diagram 2**). A flat float adapts well for use with 1/4" Birch panels, commercial Ampersand cradled boards, 1/2" or 3/4" plywood, MDF or other alternative painting surfaces. The painting overlaps onto the flat frame and attaches with screws, offset clips or wood glue. Industry profiles that can also be used include Garrett Moulding 76 Poplar series, Studio Moulding B&B 5520, or assorted flat wide liner mouldings from Larson-Juhl, Omega, Max Moulding, Southwest Moulding and others.



photo 3
Faux Flat Float with Garrett 76-797P River Rock Tan
1/4" Baltic Birch panel
encaustic painting.

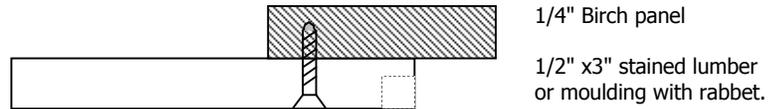


diagram 2

The 1/4" panel in **photo 3** and the side nailed homemade painted 1" cradled panel in **photo 4** have unfinished sides that visually detract from flat framing and would either have been planned for placement in a traditional frame or require clean-up. If planned for a float frame, or no frame, the edges of the unfinished box sides would have been covered with removable blue painters tape to protect it during paint application or painted black after completion. Make certain the sides are clean, painted, or stained by the artist or point out they may be visible once framed (**diagram 3**).



photo 4
1" deep cradled panel with unfinished sides
on Flat Float. Unpainted sloppy sides should be
covered or cleaned by the artist.

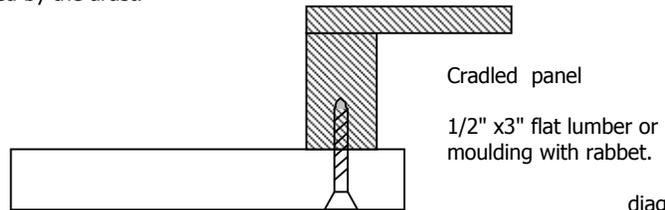
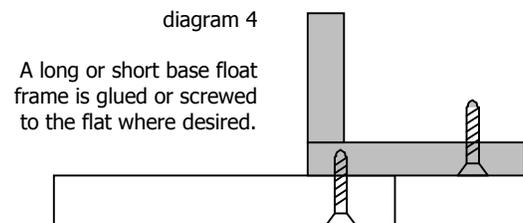


diagram 3

A flat float stack is similar to any stacked frame, being two or more frames stacked to create a new frame profile. The painted panel is mounted to the floater with hidden screws or offset clips, but never glue. Flat liners with a rabbet may be stacked and paired with float frames to create a wider decorative effect for a basic contemporary float edging. Flat liner widths vary from 2" to 5" wide, from many manufacturers, and all will have the traditional rabbet lip so you generally need a wider moulding to accommodate the weakness of the lip unless using glue to fuse them (**photo 5/diagram 4**).



photo 5
LJ Arqadia 80788 Light Walnut
float frame stacked over
Studio B&B 5520 liner flat.



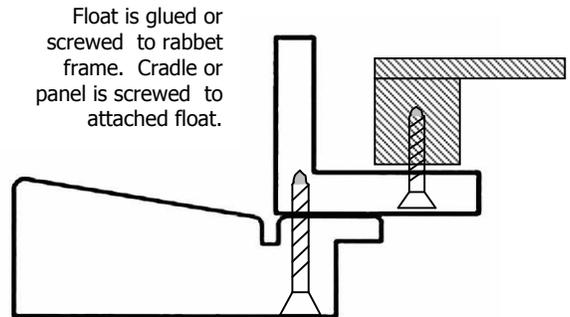
Stacked Float

Since floaters are traditionally straight and simple, stacking allows for more decorative applications and in turn greater scope and more style possibilities. In the stacked **diagram 5**, notice the cradled box is mounted to a long base float frame, then by screwing or gluing that unit to a 3" wide gold decorative flat profile the new stacked float frame becomes 4" wide and adds a color accent and dimension (**photo 6**). Staked floats easily adapt to either long or short base floater affixed on top of a wide flat profile or by capping the narrow face float with a suitable depth rabbet frame.



photo 6
Garrett 518H-501P black float frame attached to LJ Domus 367190 Gold moulding.

diagram 5



Float is glued or screwed to rabbet frame. Cradle or panel is screwed to attached float.

Capped Stack

Cap stack is a phrase to label the use of a traditional rabbet lip profile with a float frame tucked inside. As you can imagine, the possibilities are endless when you begin to play with corner samples, but there are a few things to always keep in mind when stacking mouldings as float frames:

- The float face should fit under the top edge of the cap frame.
- The full depth of the float frame must fit within the depth of the cap frame.
- If the painting is higher than the float face the added cap or stack may create the required frame depth.
- The set back from the face for an oil is no more than 1/8" while an encaustic painting may be any depth.
- The float space for oils is close and tight at a maximum of 1/8" while an encaustic may be any width.

By setting the encaustic cradle deeper into a frame allows more visibility of the black float insert which becomes an accent liner under a lighter whitewashed tall cap. The 3" deep white oak cap frame easily fits over the 2" deep black float frame in **photo 7** to accommodate a 1-1/4 to 1-1/2" cradle. Since this particular series is available in an array of wood tones any color can be picked up in the art. Notice how the contrast between the black liner and the white cap helps showcase the light colored painting through contrast.



photo 7
LJ 578142 Wren Cerused (white washed) 3" deep stacked over LJ 324940 Gallery One 2" deep black float or Universal P1710 or P1722 would also work.

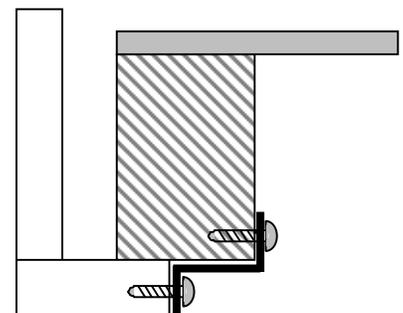


diagram 6
Offset hardware is sometimes best for short base float frame rather than screws. This unit is then stacked into the Wren cap.

Wide vs. Deep

An original 6x12" encaustic painting on 8-ply rag board is already framed using the shallow black Garrett 518H-501P float frame. By tucking it inside a wide Larson-Juhl 850790 Lucerne Onyx moulding resulting in a wide 5" frame. Since paintings are not matted like paper art the added width of the stacked frame becomes a visual substitution for decorative mats. Though a wide frame profile could overpower a small encaustic, this stacked wide float becomes the substitute for mats, and would also work well with an oversized 4' x 6' painting (**photo 8**). A wider capped float frame is more dramatic and in some cases may even better fit a client's décor.



photo 8
Larson-Juhl Lucerne Onyx 850790
moulding as a 3-5/8" contoured cap
over Garrett Garrett 518H-501P
horizontal black float.

The cap moulding in **photo 9** is 4-3/4" wide by 1-3/4" deep. This Italian wood has the strength for a heavy mirror or the depth for a 1" deep float frame and comes in three earthy shades. Unlike the contrasting cap and float frame in photo 7 or the black accent in photo 8, the dark walnut float frame Arqadia 80709 in **photo 10** color matches the 5" wide LJ 814420 Dillon Antique Timber cap which maintains the visual appearance unifying the frame as a really wide float frame rather than a simple stacked combination.



photo 9
Stacking like colors simply
turns the new stack into a
wide floater.



photo 10
LJ Dillon 814420 wide flat cap
fitted with LJ 80789 Arqadia
Dark Walnut shallow float.

The rounded brushed metallic cap Studio Moulding 42217 in **photo 11** is paired with the same LJ Arqadia Dark Walnut shallow float as in the previous photo and gives an entirely different look.



photo 11
Studio 42217 rounded metallic cap
over Larson-Juhl Arqadia 80788 Dark Walnut Float.

Use of Color

As already discussed, the float does not have to match the cap frame to create an appealing and unique design. A LJ Java carved cap is paired with a 1" deep natural white stained float Nurre Caxton 72560. Though a white painted or stained float by itself can be a little harsh when stacked with a darker cap (**photo 12**) it can prevent a potentially ominous dark float space surrounding a painting from becoming too hollow and swallowing the painting. The lighter space surrounding the art gives the viewer's eye a place to rest between the art and the carved cap, plus the lighter coloring in this sample matches the encaustic medium which expands the art to appear larger than it actually is (**photo 13**).



photo 12
Nurre Caxton 72560 with
LJ Java Bean for a deep
capped stack.



photo 13
A lighter colored
float expands the
visual size of the art
and prevents a
cavernous float space.

Limitations

Stacked float frames are wonderful and extremely versatile and the possibilities are endless. Whether using domestic or exotic self-stained wood flats or finished frame mouldings, the depth and width varieties of new stacked profiles are only limited by the rabbet depth of the cap and the depth of the gallery wrap or cradle. Make certain the depth and width of all selected materials adequately allows for full coverage and always use the proper hardware.

A basic float frame is a contemporary option for framing a gallery wrap, a faux float adds width while also the option of introducing color to a cradled panel, but a stacked float frame allows for depth, width, color, contrast, texture and greater profit potential. Stacked frames need to be displayed to be appreciated and will become the inspiration for additional stacking creativity. Faux, flat and cap stacked frames will sell themselves—or at least the stacked concept—but they must be displayed to do so.

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Resources

mouldings showcased in this article include and are available from

www.cmimoulding.com
www.garrettmoulding.com
www.larsonjuhl.com
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