When Art and Frame Become One: Dwjuan Fox

Fox explores the boundary where canvas ends and frame begins.



Shango in Big Daddy's Garden is a 4x4' mixed media centerpiece on a 9'x9' woven backing blending oil, acrylic, fiber, flora, ceramic, vinyl, & Shou Sugi Ban. Photos courtesy of Dwjuan F. Fox, artist and framer.

Artists have been framing their own art for a very long time. Van Gogh framed many of his own paintings, such as one of his Sunflowers series where the frame coloring has hints of brighter orange edging the blue background, and paler orange where with sunflowers are. Edgar Degas also framed his pieces personally and couldn't tolerate his artworks being reframed by anyone else. James Abbott McNeill Whistler also created his own frames and even signed them with little butterflies of different colors. And Gustav Klimt's paintings cannot be viewed separately from their original frames, where ornamentation from within the art is also found in the frame, believing the painting should flow into the surrounding space, merging with reality.

Dwjuan F. Fox

A contemporary art/frame collaboration is Shango in Big Daddy's Garden, by Dwjuan Fox, a 4' x 4' mixed media suspended in a 9' x 9' wood frame by a with backing of a woven fiber pattern. The frame is comprised of a simulated embroidered black vinyl and trimmed with burnt Shou Sugi Ban-style wood. The center piece and shingles are original slab ceramics bordered by hand-cut grass from his field. I encountered this large piece of art that stopped me in the aisle while attending the LA Art Show 2026. As an artist I reveled in the size, composition, and execution of a powerful piece blending oil, acrylic, fiber, flora, ceramic, vinyl, and Shou Sugi Ban.

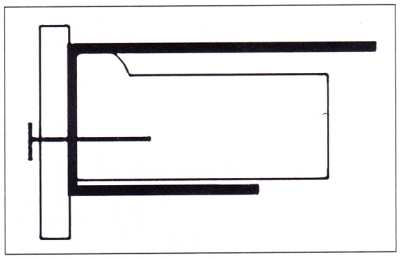


Diagram of baguette profile.

Shango is the Yoruba deity of thunder and justice, and it stands as a powerful emblem of transformation and righteous strength. By placing Shango in his grandfather's backyard garden filled with roses it became the stimulus for this mixed media



Chris A. Paschke, owner of Designs Ink in Tehachapi, CA, is a professional picture framer with over four decades of experience. She is an artist, a National Conference educator, has authored numerous magazine series, including The Essence of Design, Design Concepts, and Digital Directions for PFM, and has four self-published books on mounting. She currently writes the Mastering Mounting column for PFM and is a contributing writer to The Artist's Magazine, The Pastel Journal, and Watercolor Artist Magazine. She was honored with the PPFA Award of Distinction for Leadership 2008, the Vivian Kistler Recognition for Innovation Award 2010, and the PMA Distinguished Service Award 2012.



Yakisugi is the term used in Japan, meaning 'charred cedar or cypress', while the American translation of 'Shou Sugi Ban' translates to charred cedar/cypress plank.

piece. The garden, lovingly cultivated over decades, became a metaphor for his grandfather—layered, rich with contrasts, and unexpectedly tender. Years later, while restoring his grandfather's long-abandoned home, and after a week of storms, the roses bloomed again for the first time in years, Shango In Big Daddy's Garden simply had to be created.

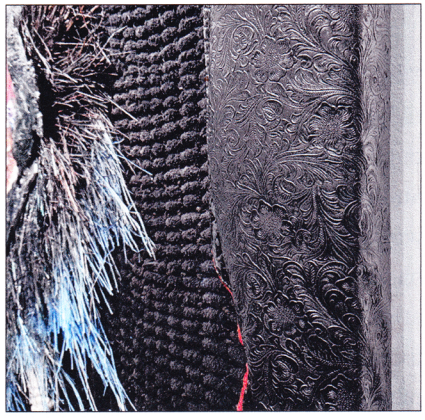
Shou Sugi Ban

Developed in the 18th century, this method involves charring wood surfaces, to help preserve and strengthen the material. This traditional Japanese wood preservation method involves charring clean wood to create a textural surface that is beautiful to look at, while also making the wood waterproof, weatherproof, rot and mold-resistant, fire resistant, and protects against termites and other insect infestations. Yakisugi, is the term used in Japan, meaning 'charred cedar or cypress', while the American translation of 'Shou Sugi Ban' translates to charred cedar/cypress plank.

The burned wood was shaped, painted black, and accented with carved red highlights, then coated with epoxy to seal the inner wood strips. The top frame layer is a shaped wood base, padded with polyester fiberfill glued to the back of the wood.



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Construction

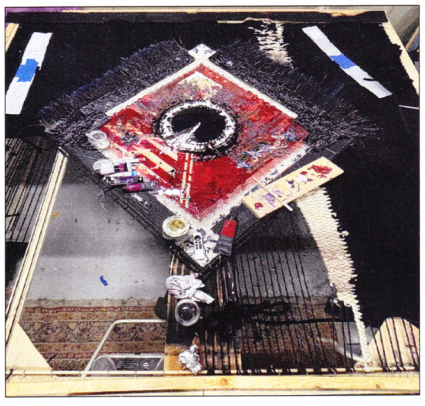
Since the frame is an essential part of the original art, their completion occurs while the art is actually being created. Though Dwjuan considers the inner 4' x 4' centerpiece the real art, it cannot be argued that the weaving surrounding it, and the outer edges of created border frame are each an intricate part of the whole. There are three layers of wood supporting the nearly 200-pound piece.

The first layer framework is essentially a strainer bar used to create the outer perimeter, to which dowel rods and rings were installed to set up the weaving framework for the woven background. There are large wood triangles bolted to each corner to reinforce the frame as well as wide wood panel up the center to support the central mixed media segment.

The second layer is the cut and shaped lower exterior frame of shou sugi ban, and the final layer is the padded, wrapped vinyl upholstered frame. These two pieces (charred wood and padded top piece) are bolted through the base framework to the back. Once bolted together there was a solid foundation for the art. Since the hand weaving was created on the final framework around the mounted centerpiece everything was fabricated somewhat at the same time.

Words from Dwjuan

Dwjuan Fox's approach is not guided by aesthetic conventions, but by the energies and impulses that course through the human spirit, often shaped by contradiction, vulnerability, and resilience. A central theme in his work is the interplay between chaos and order, nature and structure.



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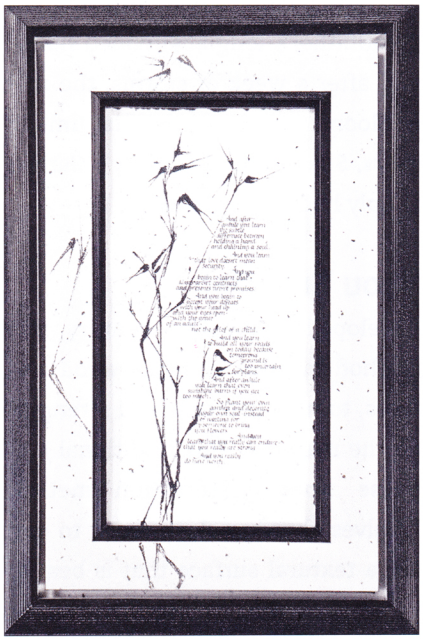
Completed Shango with Dwjuan Fox standing beside for contrast.

"I do not create from the division of mind, but the sentience of soul. It is all things, a thirst for wonder, a fear of the unknown, a need for safety, a sacrifice that enlightens, a love that inspires, and even a hate that can diminish. I have always thought of my work as a Gohonzon, a mirror into one's human psyche. It is a term in Japanese Buddhism that translates to 'object of fundamental respect', helping oneself in perceiving and bringing forth the life condition of Buddhahood from within themselves.

Surrounded by machine driven perfection, and algorithms, I explore the human entity and the beauty of that imperfection. I mix the organic unpredictable current of nature in all its forms, confined, or freed, but transformed into structured constructs as juxtaposition. Two-dimensional form becomes a three-dimensional substance and in subconscious ways the viewer unpacks what these transformations mean to them. Within the human experience, transformation can be both liberating and a frightening upheaval manifested in many ways throughout our lives. Despite our comfort with either, our need for culture, music, and art, proves our desire to communicate on levels beyond what we can see, think, and feel. I believe mankind is in the process of growing and my art speaks to that." — Dwjuan Fox

Framing Limitations

Paintings have historically been placed in frames both to add support and to cover unfinished canvas edges. During the mid-twentieth century, the display of unframed stretched canvases became very trendy and heavier, deeper strainer bars were used to support the canvases intended for display with no exterior





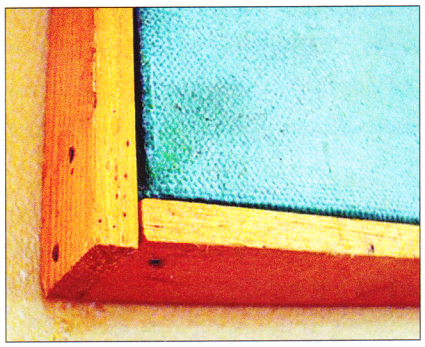
PPFA OPEN entry 1990s disqualified for art extended onto matboard. Outer frame is 16 1/2" x 25" with 3/8" space between rabbet and floated mat, and 2" surface tiered mat surrounding fillet holding original calligraphy.



The lower right corner detail of a painting/frame fusion, Volcano Glitch, 2016, by Adam Straus.

frame reinforcement required, called gallery wraps. Such is the case with many of the paintings from the abstract expressionist era. Keep in mind that canvases that are on 3/4"-deep bars do not fall into the category of a gallery wrap and should always be displayed with a frame.

The practice of stripping—also called a baguette—was developed during that time in an attempt to help finish off the look of an unframed canvas. It is the application of thin wood strips 1/4" to 3/8" thick fitted against the outer edges of a painting to add support. They are sometimes mitered, but most often butt joined and nailed directly into the strainer through the canvas. Unfortunately this type of frame offers little additional support and only serves as a slight visual improvement. Today's float frame has evolved from the baguette, with more support and exterior protection, while allowing for a float space between the outer moulding and the inner canvas.



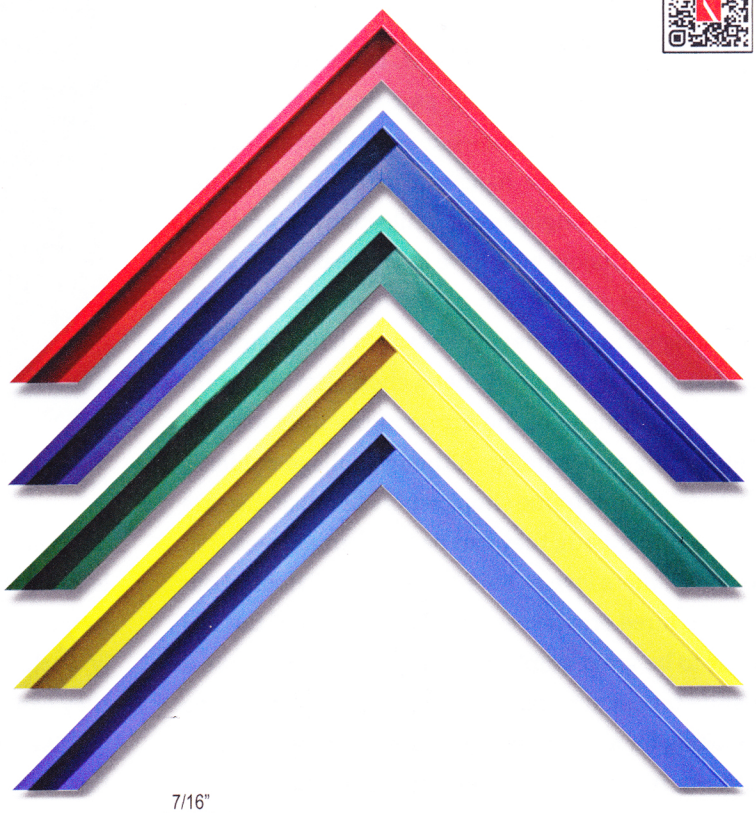
Lattice strips/baguettes are usually extended full top to bottom at the sides with the horizontal strips tucking inside.

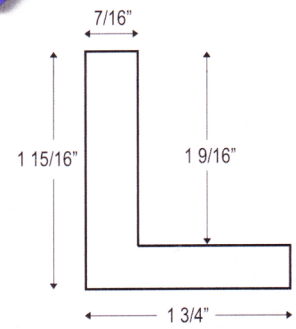
Many artists today continue to create their own frames by fusing their art with the frame by expanding the inner image onto the frame, becoming an intricate portion of the art.

Framers have been taught to look for patterns and textures within the art to reintroduce in moulding to help create a unity between the original and the added framing. This is a given, but remember, we are never allowed to actually extend a lateral portion of the art onto the mat or the frame. Only the artist may elect to do that. That is not to say that suggesting such a collaboration is a bad idea, it's more the artist not thinking beyond the completion of their art. PFM

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