

The Design Process

Clarification: Critique #2

by Chris A. Paschke, CPF

Once again this month with critique #2, we reach the final *clarification* stage by beginning with the first stage of the 5-stage process of design. We must first *define* the project, then *create* our perfect solution, *analyze* the plans based on any financial and/or time limitations, then *produce* the framed piece. The final critique and overview will hopefully help identify any design strengths and weaknesses.

Defining The Project

The selected image for this month is "Blue Shawl" by Penni Anne Cross, designed and framed by Dwyer's Framing Gallery, Whitefish, Montana. It features a signed, limited edition of a lovely Indian maiden draped in a fringed blue shawl, accented with hand beadwork jewelry, and a non-descript textural background of red based natural tones (photo 1). No framing specifications were given by the client but to frame for the art image itself and not the room in which it would ultimately end up.

Creating A Solution

The frame design was chosen to showcase the beauty and delicacy of the maiden by its delicate and subtle use of textural fabric, embossed mat, beaded medallion and customized frame. Using a fabric mat allowed for a more natural environment, emulating a

Photo 1.
Limited edition by
Penni Anne Cross,
"Blue Shawl"
framed and offered
for critique by
Dwyer's Framing
Gallery, Whitefish,
MT.

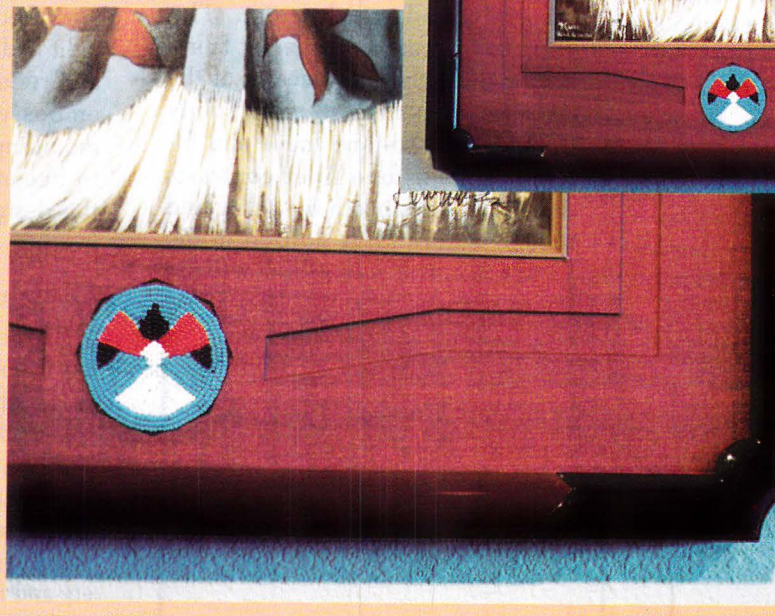


Photo 2.
Detail of embossed mat, custom
beadwork medallion and NuFrame
decorative frame.

lifestyle more in harmony with that of the American Indian. The high gloss, hand crafted moulding reflects the polished, delicate features in the face of the maiden and the handicrafts of their culture.

Analyzing The Materials/Limitations

The client set a ceiling of \$1000 for purchase of the image and framing. Since the beaded medallion would need to be custom created to match the pattern in the artwork,

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allowed as long as needed to complete the total design.

Frame dimensions were 21"x24" using a NuFrame made to order 1" moulding. The machined struts are Burgundy #D-23 with #P-313 black corners. The fillet is a Nurre Caxton Sandstone #9917 Dusty Rose to pick up and harmonize with the textural background.

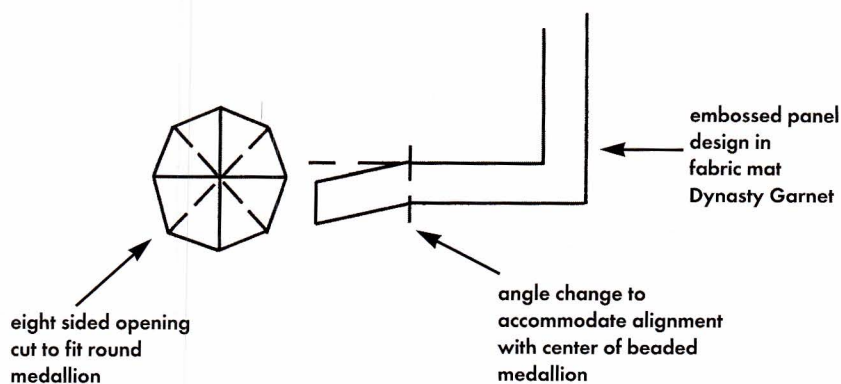
Framing Fabrics Dynasty Garnet fabric was selected to be applied over a double 4 ply mat combination featuring embossed cutouts both for visual concentration and to house the beaded medallion. The fabric was applied in the traditional wet glue method using Miracle Muck.

The entire piece was glazed using Denglas and required a 1/8" glass spacer to suspend it higher than the beadwork.

Who, What, When, Where, Why

Utilizing the who, what, when, where, why and how approach to initial analyzation, the eye (who) is caught first by the face of the Indian girl (what), hesitates while her face and beadwork jewelry is examined (when), drops straight down to beaded medallion in the center of the lower mat border (where), then is lead by the embossed line around the mat to be caught by the customized non-rectangular upper corners of the frame. Then is drawn back into the face of the maiden only to begin again.

Diagram 1



An obvious desire to reflect and duplicate the images and texture will allow for greatest unity (why). Remember, 'why' involves the selection of specific contrasts and accents to evoke particular emotions and viewer responses stimulated by correct use of design principles . . . or the *how*. How all this is achieved is by integrating the use of individual elements and factors. Let's investigate how many elements were integrated in this design.

Analyzing The Elements

Refer to diagrams 1 and 2 from last month's critique as the principles are examined. *Line* (1) was used by both the contrasting dusty rose fillet and the embossed panel design. The given in this case is the garnet fabric mat, making the introduction of the *color* (2) element used more subtly through the two-tone frame and fillet. The sandstone fillet contrasts directly to the smooth moulding and though *texture* (3) is utilized in the beadwork, the medallion will be noted more as intensity. The fabric

mat is essentially the given in this case from which all texture variables are compared (photo 2).

The embossed line around the inner 1/3rd edge of the mat required a visual adjustment for the presentation of the medallion at the bottom of the mat. In order for the eye to feel comfortable with the line in relation to the beadwork.

The effective use of *shape* (4) by bending the embossing, gently centers the visual concentration (diagram 1). The contoured corners of the frame also utilize shape in a rather dramatic way, somewhat reflecting the burgundy shapes in the shawl (diagram 2).

Intensity (4) is most often best identified by dramatic uses of highlight and shadows. The subtle depth and reflections created by both the embossed mat and the decorator moulding corners require intensity to become a counted principle in this design. Space has not been used in a way to make it countable.

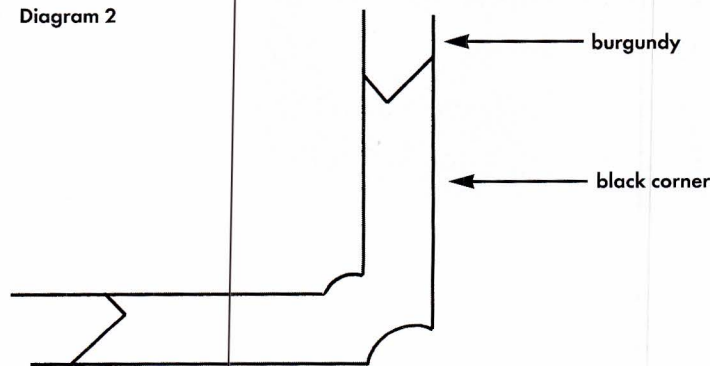
Factoring It Together

Elements are the building blocks but factors hold the elements together in cohesive unit. The *proportions* selected are comfortable with the basic image size. They allow plenty of room for mat decoration and don't duplicate the widths of fillet, line or moulding allowing for adequate variety and interest.

Emphasis is visual control or use of dynamic focal point, which in this case plays back and forth between the beadwork in the art and the

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Diagram 2



continued from page 34

case plays back and forth between the beadwork in the art and the accented medallion at mat bottom. It's not overly busy, but definitely makes a strong visual statement.

The embossed line surrounding the image was set at approximately $\frac{2}{3}$ of the distance from the outer moulding edge to the window opening to establish an appropriate balance and placement. *Balance* seems well thought out especially in relation to the weighted bottom width

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required for the medallion. If the frame unit is split down the center or across the middle, a visual asymmetrical balance remains evident in relation to visual concentration.

Use of *rhythm* in this design is very obvious, to the point of needing to nearly count it as an element. The same beadwork was identified under intensity and you need only recog-

nize a specific one time, this then is simply reenforcement. The beadwork has been literally pulled out of the image and effectively presented as a physical 3-dimensional unit.

Total count of utilized elements . . . 5, with a special notation for rhythm. Interesting to have that high a count when the overall image appears quite simple at first glance. This could be noted as the sign of a successful, well organized, *unified* frame design. The style or flavor of the American Indian maiden remains the dominant, while subtle accents reinforce the overall presentation.


Design Philosophy

Dwyer's Framing Gallery has a well established philosophy behind their successful use of design principles. They practice controlling the use of excessive elements during framing if the original image is very active and busily playing with many elements itself.

A Bev Dolittle image is very busy, hence the peripheral framing must remain controlled and simple so as not to compete with the art. If "Blue Shawl" had shown the girl on a horse, surrounded by a full landscape and other active Indians in the distance, the beaded medallion and customized moulding corners probably would not have been effective.

Wrap Up

Limit the elements of design when there are too many active elements happening in the artwork itself. Framing should work well with the image as a whole, make a statement in its own right, but never compete or overpower the art. Don't over design!

Well done class! Next month I'll be presenting the last of the three critiques, hopefully with a shadow box. 

Chris A. Paschke, CPF has a B.A. in "Creative Arts and Design", has been a professional calligraphic designer and lettering artist since 1975, and continues to teach two- and three-dimensional Layout and Design courses across the country. She is the owner of Designs Ink, Oxford, Connecticut, specializing in commercial framing, fine art calligraphy and lettering design, and consultation.