

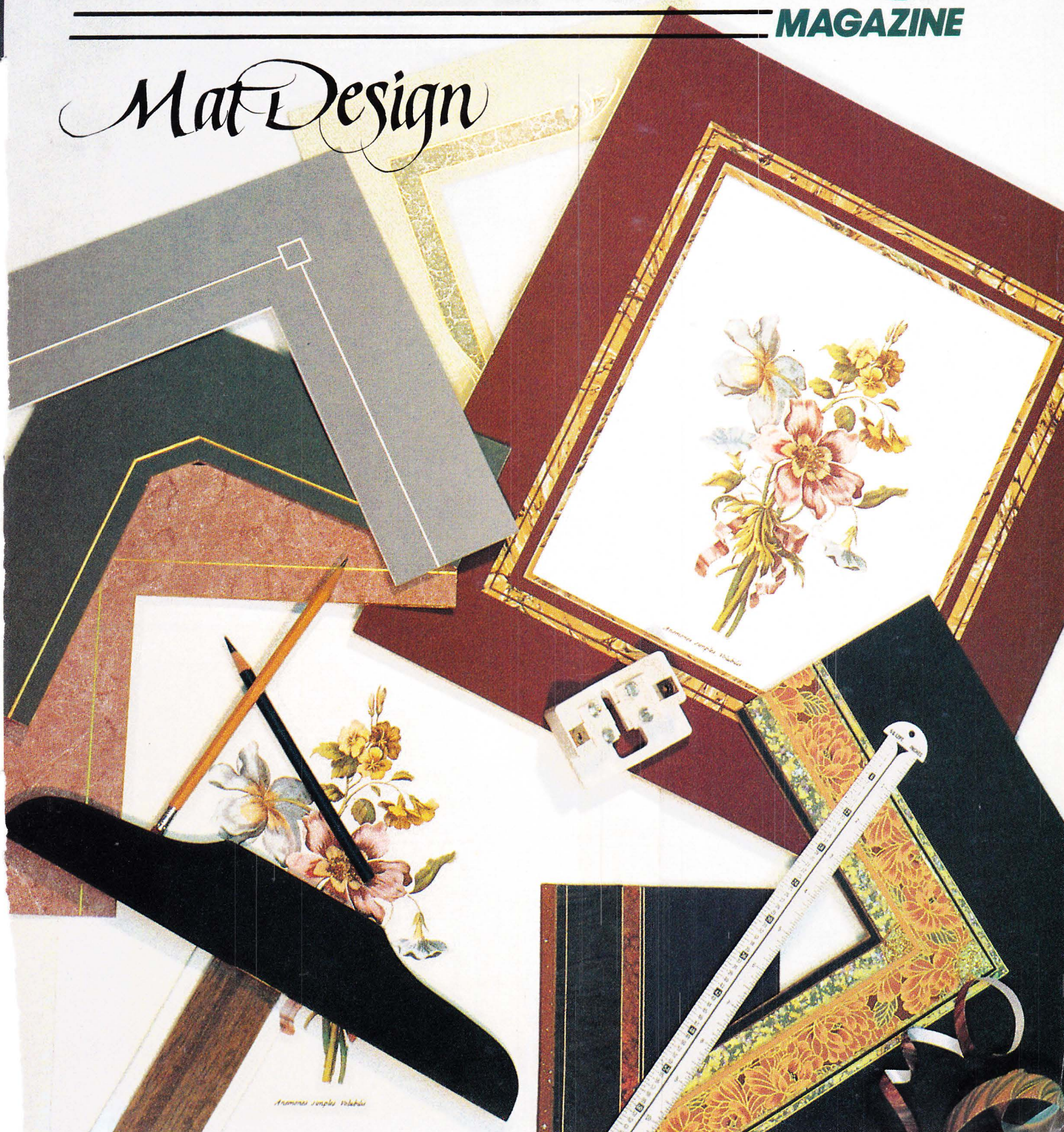
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PICTURE

FRAMING

MAGAZINE

Mat Design





Sell Mat Design

by Chris A. Paschke, CPF

With the onset of the 90's, wonderfully innovative educators, designers and manufacturers (myself included), have bombarded the innocent framer with new products, new techniques and new ways to turn a "larger profit" through mat design. It seems the banner word of the decade has become "creativity" and I for one, must say that I am thrilled to be an instigator, smack in the middle of it all!

Exotic uses of somewhat traditional matting materials, boards and design concepts can stimulate the creative framer and often help establish the niche he/she needs to set them apart from the rest and give them the competitive edge. Well executed "creative" mat design interpretations are quite commonplace at framing competitions, simply illustrating the quality and expertise

with which new concepts and design ideas are blossoming. Consider the design milestone of the first triple mat, or Sean Hunt's V-groove. Today it takes pigmented, double thick, 3/16" deep wrapped foam board bevels to evoke a fraction of that enthusiasm and awe, simply because of the plethora of matting creativity in the market.

As an industry educator and calligraphic artist I love creativity, but wish to caution the over ambitious. One of the keys to good design is "perfected simplicity". Often, *one* very well executed design element will not only add to the finished project, but will take less time while still picking up those previously lost (or hidden) profits.

The concept is to "set off" the artwork and not overwhelm it. I've seen aggressive designers attempt to inte-

grate far too many elements into a single framed piece, and regardless of the expertise with which the design is handled . . . the art is lost. In light of all the tiered matting, contempo panels, leather-look, surface panel designing (paint, powder, embossing, linets, etc.) faux glass etching, deep bevel wraps and the like, I alone, have flooded the industry with numerous "creative" ways to stimulate your daily routine, recycle those end cuts and pull additional profits out of your existing equipment.

Be genteel, be conservative yet innovative, and above all have the confidence you deserve as a "creative" designer to charge for your skills and to realize that *you* are a professional. Mat design should aid in the transition from the art to the frame, and in turn, pull it all together into a harmonized unit where no one element outdoes another.

Never lose sight of the elements and factors of good design, and the "KISS" theory (Keep It Simple & Stupid). If time is money, then isn't the shortest distance between two points a straight line? Perhaps a quarter inch painted panel with pen and embossed lines on a botanical is better than an elaborate double deep wrapped, pigmented bevel with accented tiered top and bottom mats with spacers—or is it? You be the judge. You'll always make more money on the few specialized and perfected designs you can execute quickly, perfectly, and without much additional thought.

As simple and imperative as mat design is, it can also be terribly exciting and "creative". It frustrates me to see potential profits and simple design additions being ignored. If we hope to continue the industry's need for the "human element" and the design specialist, it's up to each one of us to stimulate and educate the unknowing consumer with the conservation *and* design potential available!

Now go out there, be "creative", controlled, enthusiastic, informative and *sell, sell, sell!*

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