

# STACKED MOULDING

# AN EYE-CATCHING DESIGN OPTION



*PULL THE DESIGN RABBIT OUT OF THE HAT WITH THIS TASTEFUL, TIMELESS TECHNIQUE.*

*By Adela A. Davis, MCPF*

**T**his heirloom was recovered from grandmother's chest in the attic! When my client came across this wonderful piece, she knew that she wanted to keep the necklace preserved to honor the fact that her grandmother traveled all over the world. My client was she was not sure of the origin of the necklace. This piece would indeed portray to viewers that a far reach from the US was involved in obtaining this treasure.

Immediately there were design issues to deal with as the necklace was

already mounted on a 5/8" MDF substrate. The substrate was covered with linen and the necklace was couched down. Apparently, holes were drilled into the substrate, but it was clear other methods were used to hold down the tie-on straps of the neck piece—i.e., glue. At this point, the dialogue began with preservation methods and quickly, my client made the decision to press on with the original mount and work the design around that presentation. While she appreciated my input concerning preservation, practicality won out on this decision. No matter what our designations are in the framing world, there is a point when we need to be able to be flexible with a client's decisions. With that said, always take the opportunity to educate your clientele about the preservation and care of their heirloom.

The next "tackle" on the design was the depth needed. The 2.5" needed to clear the original mount and embellishments on the necklace was a concern. Knowing how to stack mouldings success-

● *Stacked frames were used to accommodate the depth needed for this necklace, a family heirloom that was brought in by a client.*

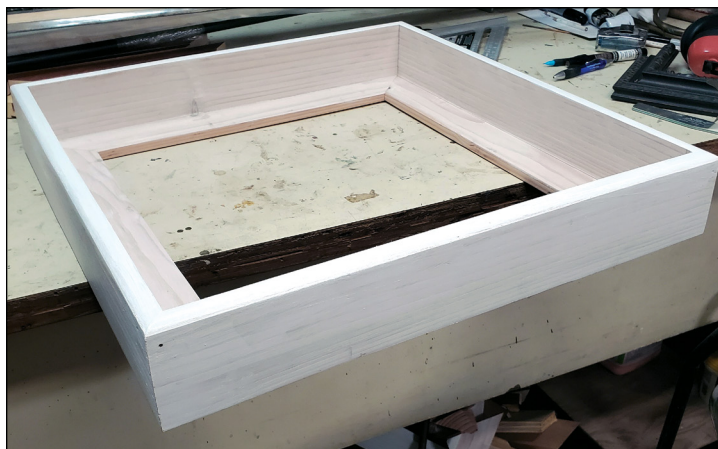


● The necklace came in mounted on a 5/8" MDF substrate, causing some design challenges.

fully and confidently helped the design process not be confined. In the end, this design had three major moulding components involved; two of the mouldings were milled and finished in-house, and the third had a lovely period style that was pleasing to the owner's taste. The texture in the moulding blended well with the surface area of the necklace. The finished color also beautifully matched the layered colors in the necklace.

The in-house mouldings consisted of one for height and one for transition front to back pieces. During the design process, my client loved the look of a float frame with silver leafing on the top edge. Everything about the moulding was attractive; the color wash of the wood blended beautifully with the linen mount, and the silver leafing peaked out from the top moulding like a fillet would. Unfortunately, this moulding only gave us 2 1/4" and we needed at least 2 1/2".

To resolve this, we decided to make our own frame that resembled the look of the floater that had caught the client's eye. Once my carpenter knew all the parameters, he chose to use 4" x 4" clear pine stock. He cut away two sides, leaving us with a solid L shape. The remainder of the wood was used to cut the tran-



● Custom-milled shadowbox built to house the original mounted necklace.



● Finished transition profile to match the sample moulding that caught the client's eye.

sition piece (more details on that later). This new shadowbox height was built first, sanded, primed, toned, and gilded so it blended nicely with the linen from the necklace's original mount. I screwed the original mount from the verso to this shadowbox, recessing the screw heads into the base of the wood with the appropriate length of wood screw. If ever needed, this original mount could easily be removed.

The next step involved building the cap frame. This needed to come next so that the depth needed for figuring out the height and placement of the transition piece could be determined. After this top frame moulding was cut, we could then ascertain what depth would be needed to transition backward. This included installing the glazing. As I was putting all the components together, the thought came to me that if somehow the glazing ever needed to be replaced, easy access would be needed. This household has three energetic children, and I was thinking ahead for my client. This would avoid tedious unfastening of all the components. In addition to fulfilling all the design components, I had to design a way for easy access to the glazing. A magnetic top frame was the perfect answer.

There is a plethora of



● Detail of silver leaf applied to the shadowbox to match the sample moulding.



● Finished transition moulding attached to side of custom shadowbox by drilling finish screws through the sides.



● A single recessed magnet at the top edge of the base moulding and top moulding.

magnet sizes and strengths. With a bit of internet browsing, you will be able to find what you need. The magnets were recessed into the moulding using a paddle bit and drill press. The top/cap moulding was fitted with the Tru Vue's Museum Glass. Using a shadowbox technique, the glazing was held in place with painted balsa wood strips and small nails, easy to pry away if needed. This process not only allows for easy glazing repair, but also gives the owner a way to easily lift off the top framing unit to touch, feel, and show off her heirloom.

A bit of conferring with my wood worker ensued, letting him know that I did not want the transition piece to be bulky. I knew that the milled wood needed to angle back to fill the negative space. My carpenter was able to use the leftover block of wood from the L shape. He positioned the 45 degrees to dissect the block in half, making sure the final cuts equaled close to the height needed for the transition. As noted in the photograph, the back end of the transition piece landed about 1/4" from the base. This made the profile a bit more interesting in the end. I was then able to chop, join, and finish the frame, and attach it with finish screws. Finish screws are specially made screws that sit flush or below the surface of the material it is being screwed into. Finish screws have a small, flat head on top of the threads. They are very easy to install and can make your project look more professional.

The shadowbox moulding had about 1/2" protruding once the transition piece was installed so that I was able to create a slip over the top frame, only needing one large, strong magnet set. Exact measuring and cutting also insured a firm fit over the shadowboxed unit. I have great confidence that the top frame not only sat securely, but was also removeable—the large magnet set had ample holding power. When working with this depth of a framing unit, I find that Wall Buddies, D rings, or Z bars are appropriate to use for stability. I used Wall buddies on this job.

One of the skills involved in stacking moulding is the ability to use a table saw. If your shop does not have a table saw, I suggest outsourcing—find a good woodworker, carpenter, or cabinet shop. If you don't possess the skills yourself, having a craftsman you can call will open your designing world to fabulous stacking possibilities.

The other skill set involved is knowing how to execute finishing the wood. All milled wood was sealed with shellac. When the shellac was dried, a base color

of gray was used because of its neutrality. The next color was chosen after carefully inspecting and studying how the sample float frame was finished. If you are fortunate enough to have taken some of the classes at The National Conference, especially the gilding series, you know how



● A slip over the top frame allowed enough depth for the moulding and glazing to comfortably and securely fit over the base unit.

all these layers of colors, washes, gilding, and dusting work together. This knowledge is especially helpful when runs of color do not perfectly match your wall moulding sample. I can't tell you how many times knowing these techniques have "pulled the rabbit out of the hat" for me!

I would like to dedicate this article to my carpenter, Neil Cunningham, who recently passed away at the age of 80 on Jan. 11. A structural engineer by trade, he spent time in his fabulous woodshop building cabinets, furniture, and helping me with more complicated frame jobs than I can count. He also kept me in good supply of ripped wood wider than most frame spacers provided for the moulding rabbet. **PFM**



#### **Adela A. Davis**

Adela has been picture framing for over 40 years, half of which as an independent shop owner. Adela has been involved with art since high school, being part of the "art club" team who made posters and banners for events. Fate led her to picture framing, which she has been happily doing this past 40 years. She is a board member of the PFFA's Central Texas chapter, where she helps host and organize a yearly educational event for area framers. She is also a board member of the PFFA's certification program. Once a quarter, you can find her as a facilitator for the online CPF certification class

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