

An Overview of the History of Matting

Introduction

This collection has been assembled not to illustrate or duplicate the physical construction or even the actual history of the mat, but what we know or suspect of its design. The history of art on paper is the history of paper itself. The first mention of paper mills was in the late 13th century and not until the mid 15th century was paper first used in quantity. Only after paper manufacturing was fully developed and paper common that it was used in framing. For much of the early dates we can only speculate on what might have been done as paper art itself was not commonly matted or framed.

For the first four hundred years represented, very little matting or framing would have been done. Any bordering that was done was most likely done as repair and at a later date. Most repair consisted of backing onto another sheet of paper. The early paper art, a means of communication, was most often in folio or book form.

Mat decoration originated as the artists desire to set their work apart, to direct the eye to the image. It may have started as a simple line etched or engraved into the plate and then progressed to elaborate, eye catching borders. Although the earliest borders were on the art itself, they soon appeared on the papers used to mount and repair. Not until the development of glass was art on paper displayed in any great quantity and even then the first glass was expensive and of poor viewing quality.

The earliest type of mat would most likely have been of wood, made as part of the frame. It would have been decorated or at least gilded. Mats then separated from the frame and were paper covered wood frames. The first window mats were single sheets of paper. The first cardboard dates from the industrial revolution in the early 19th century. The cardboard was hand-covered with artists paper by the framer. The late 19th century saw the introduction of ready to use mat board. Framing as we know it had arrived.

This display of art from the 13th to the 20th century is as much about design as it is the matting and framing of art, for in truth they are the same. Art is design and the matting and framing a part of that design. What we know today as period designs are the best of each era. The line, the curve, the pattern, the color - only the best live on, the rest are lost. We can recognize many of the same elements of design serving more than one period. Good design is used again and again. Each period of matting and framing is an expression of contemporary designs or those of an earlier period. The most significant changes are in the materials, but the basics of good design remain constant.

These examples all incorporate modern materials. Most of the 19th and 20th century mats are exact replications of originals while many of the 18th century mats are copies of period designs. Most of the earlier pieces are simply interpretations in the spirit of an era. All the frames are authentic period reproductions in designs contemporary with (or predating) the art. Many of the older items would not have been framed in their time but at a later date.

From 1290, before matting, to 1992 when the mat is also the art, the mats purpose has always been the same: to create a favorable surrounding for art. This is as true today as it was in the beginning.



1290 **Bible** **Page,**
Apocalypse 8, Hand-lettered, iron-gall ink & color on vellum, with glosses, This Western European Bible page was hand-written in Latin by a scribe. The chapter known as The Apocalypse is Revelations. The Holy Bible had been divided into chapters for the first time by Cardinal Hugo in 1227. Spectacles were invented circa 1280 and must have been a contributing factor to the minuscule size of the writing, particularly the marginal notes or glosses! Medieval ink, called "iron-gall", was a mixture of tannin obtained from nutgalls, and iron sulphate. Pale in the inkwell, it darkened upon exposure to air. The alchemy of mixing ink was touchy: it could "underdevelop" and be too faint, or the page could literally be eaten away.

European books of this period were generally made of prepared animal skins called vellum or parchment. (Paper from plant fiber was not in general use for another hundred years). Books were produced by copying and errors were inevitable. Corrections are most common in Bibles because they were actually read, most often by clerics who would note and annotate scribal errors.

This page would not have been framed until the book itself had outlived its usefulness. However, it is framed here in the spirit of its time. No mat is used - rather a simulated gilt panel onto which the vellum is hinged. The tabernacle frame borrows architectural elements of the period (1200-1420). Gothic architecture emerged in France (Choir of St.Denis, c1040) and soon predominated in Europe. Rib vaulting and pointed arches combined soaring heights with delicacy. Exteriors were covered with painted relief sculpture and elaborate architectural detail. Religious images of this time were typically housed in architectonic frames.



1498 Albrecht Dürer,
The Martyrdom of St. John, Woodcut, from *The Apocalypse*, published in Nuremberg
 This woodcut was printed with text and published in a folio. The first pages printed from movable, metal type were produced by Johann Gutenberg in Mainz circa 1440. Even before 1500, printing had spread to 60 German towns, and German printers would take the technology to England, France, Holland, Italy and Spain. While the Renaissance was in full bloom in Italy (beginning in Florence circa 1420, Venice & Padue 1450), the Late Gothic style predominated in the German Empire (including Austria, Hungary, The Netherlands, Luxembourg & Burgundy) from 1420 to 1500. Imposing civic architecture flourished in the prosperous commercial cities.

This matting treatment imitates the old practice of removing printed images from folios or books, trimming off the marginal paper and “tipping” them onto sheets of paper with glue or paste. These secondary sheets were often decorated with ink lines around the image. The frame replicates, in smaller scale, original frames on Durer paintings of this period.



1606 Guido Fawkes & The Gunpowder Plotters
Engraving, published in Germany

This is a political cartoon, poking fun at events across the channel. Although this was the age of Bacon (1561-1626) and Shakespeare (1564-1633), England had her problems! James IV of Scotland had been crowned James I of England in 1603. Determined to rid England of its Scottish king, a fanatical band including Guy ‘Guido’ Fawkes, hatched a plot to level Parliament and James I with a single blast of gunpowder. Fawkes was to fire the charge on November 5, 1605 but was arrested and tortured along with the others.

The Baroque, originating in Rome circa 1600, has begun to spread throughout Europe, but the immense popularity of secular art (landscape, still life, genre) north of the Alps continued. In Holland, distinctive, secular frames were developed for the art-buying public including plain black and natural, polished wood frames with continuously machined designs we sometimes describe as “Dutch ripple”. The dark frames were sometimes relieved by oil-gilding the ornamental bands. This framing treatment reflects the simplicity of Alpine/Netherlandish secular designs of the period.



**Circa 1640 Wenzel Hollar
Aeneas Plucking the Golden Branch, Etching,
printed in England**

This print, after a painting by F. Cleyn, depicts a scene from Virgil's poem "Aeneid", Book 6, Line 280 according to the notation in the plate. Virgil (Publius Vergilius Maro, 70 - 19 BC) wrote this tale of a Trojan hero in Latin, and it is not clear which translation Hollar refers to. A rough translation of this portion of the poem is "Aeneas followed the directions of the Sibyl. His mother, Venus, sent two of her doves to fly before him and show him the way, and by their assistance he found the tree, plucked the branch, and hastened back with it to the Sibyl".

Hollar was born in a noble family which lost everything in the Bohemian wars. He took up etching as his life profession and traveled throughout Europe before being discovered by the great English connoisseur Thomas Howard, the Earl of Arundel, who brought him to England in 1637 to reproduce his collection.

At this time there were no native artists in England. Hollar left England for the safety of the Continent after the beginning of the Great Rebellion (First Civil War 1642-46, Second Civil War 1648 - Charles I beheaded 1649). After the Restoration he returned but worked for the book and print publishers and died in poverty in 1677. In the early Baroque period, Italian influence spread throughout Western Europe. Baroque is characterized by dynamic movement in painting and sculpture, emphasized by sharp lighting effects and realistic details. Architectural elements included rich materials such as colored marble and gilt, broken lines and deep-cut details. During the first half of the seventeenth century, leadership in the decorative arts passed from Italy to France. By combining Italian Baroque influences with their own taste for rectilinear order and serenity expressed in classical forms, the Louis XIII era (ruled 1610-1643) commenced two centuries of French leadership in the arts.

The mat design is a classic "French mat", a traditional, seventeenth century line pattern originally executed with ink on mid-weight paper. Most early paper mats were simply decorated backing sheets, but later examples had cut-out windows. (see PFM, Sept. 1993). In deference to the delicacy of Hollar's work, the frame is a scaled-down adaptation of a Venetian frame of the period.



Circa 1730 Hamlet Winstanley after G.B. Castiglione,

Two Rams, Engraving, published in England

After training on the Continent, Winstanley returned to England and took the life-long position of recording Lord Derby's massive collection of art in the ancestral home, Knowsley. The engravings were bound in volumes for Lord Derby's library.

During the late Baroque period, nationalistic trends emerged. In France, the Regence, from 1715 to 1723, was a transitional period from Louis XIV Baroque to Rococo. Louis XV (1715-1774) was five years old when his father died and did not actually rule until 1723.

Rococo, or miniature Baroque, emerged about 1730 characterized by extravagant decorative effects, curved lines and asymmetries based on organic models.

In England, the Early Georgian period from George I (1714-1727) through George II (1727-1760) was characterized by residual Queen Ann (1702-1714) mixed with French Rococo influences.

William Hogarth was the most influential artist/social critic of that time. The English had contempt for foreigners and most indigenous artists allied themselves to seventeenth century Dutch traditions (Bruegel, for example).

The mat is a replica of an English paper mat of the period, showing the inevitable, but simplified, French influence. The frame, typical of English drawing frames of the time, combines the influence of Dutch secular frames (black) with French decorative elements (carved entry detail and sand panel in gilt).



Circa 1750 Map of North America Hand-colored engraving, published in London

This map was a supplement in Universal Magazine, a popular English publication of the period. The first half of the eighteenth century was a time of great discovery and change. The Industrial Revolution began in England - advances in coal mining and coke smelting, new large cotton textile factories and the discovery of steam power. North America was still divided into colonies of European nations, largely English.

English Rococo was at its height from 1745 to 1765 with the designs of Thomas Chippendale and although Rococo styles were popular in America from 1750 to 1780, American framemakers also adapted earlier Dutch-inspired English looking-glass frame designs.

The mat is a replica of an English paper mat of the period. It is unique in its use of an "inwash" - a band of color (originally watercolor) around the window opening. In some examples, such as this, the entire mat is washed with color with a deeper value of the same color used on the inwash. The

frame replicates a unique American style. The projecting corner (also called crossetted or extended) was a popular architectural treatment in mid-eighteenth century America. The dark, wood veneer panel with gilt bands echoes seventeenth century Dutch frames and subsequent English adaptations.



1776 Map of America
Hand-colored engraving, published by
Antonio Zatta, Venice

This map was originally bound in an atlas. In the years preceding its publication, Under George III (1759-1820), British attempts to control colonial trade and to tax the colonists to pay for the costs of colonial administration and defense clashed with traditions of local self government and eventually provoked the colonies to rebellion. On July 4, 1776 the Declaration of Independence was adopted by the Continental Congress in Philadelphia. England lost the war and “the colonies” in 1783, changing forever the mapping of America.

In Europe shortly after the middle of the eighteenth century a reaction set in to the exuberant styles of Rococo. Inspired by the new scientific archeology (the discovery of Herculaneum and Pompeii), the Classic Revival (1750-1790's) is characterized by a return to straight line, symmetry and classic ornamental details. This new style is often called Louis XVI (1774-1792), although it was well under way before 1774.

The mat is an eighteenth century Continental design, combining both French and Italian elements. The frame is a seventeenth century Franco-Italian design, amazingly in keeping with the lighter, thinner frames coming into use.



1778 Gladiola Tristis Varietas from Florae Austriacae, Volume 5, Hand-colored engraving, published by Nicolaus Joseph Von Jacquin, Vienna

This elegant book plate, engraved by I.. Adam after a painting by F. Scheidl, epitomizes the “noble simplicity” of the Classic Revival style. During the last half of the eighteenth century, explorations to discover of plant and animal life throughout the known world were encouraged and supported by European royalty. The results are the finest examples of botanical and natural history illustrations extant.

The straight, simple mouldings of Classic Revival frames were decorated with sharply defined foliage, pearls, bull’s eyes and ribbons.

The essentially pure lines of the Louis XVI style appealed to designers in other countries. In England, the Late Georgian style (George III, 1760-1820) is epitomized by architects Robert and John Adam (1760’s - 1779) and furniture designers Hepplewhite and Sheritan. The mat replicates a French paper mat of the period . The frame is a typical Louis XVI drawing frame moulding used throughout Europe.



Circa 1794 A Natural History Painting, Opaque watercolor on paper watermarked J.Whatman 1794, England

This original painting was intended for reproduction in a natural history book and is therefore unsigned. Although the watermark is 1794, and from an English mill, that is not an entirely accurate means of identifying the piece. Paper was often ordered from a mill for a specific project, then stockpiled until needed. This particular paper ,“papier vellin”, was handmade using a process developed in France which produced a smooth, semi-transparent paper with qualities similar to vellum. Both vellum and papier vellin were used extensively in France and England for opaque watercolor paintings of this period. I

In the 1880’s, the growing French middle class lacked political power and resented aristocratic tax

privileges, especially in light of liberal political ideals popularized by the American Revolution. The storming of the Bastille July 14, 1789 by Parisian artisans was followed by looting and seizure of aristocratic property throughout France. A republic was declared in Sept. 1792, in spite of royalist pressure from Austria and Prussia, which had declared war in April (joined by England the next year). Louis XVI was guillotined Jan. 1793, Queen Marie Antoinette in Oct. 1793. France's influence in the decorative arts had come to a temporary halt. The "reign of terror" saw the execution of thousands, followed by radical reforms in the Convention period (1793-1795). This period of war may explain why these illustrations were never published. Traditionally, the Neo-Classic period begins in 1795 with the ascendance of a moderate Directory (Directoire, 1795-1799). The mat replicates an English paper mat (mount) of the period, which is an adaptation of contemporary French designs (see PFM, Sept. 1993). The delicate, fluted frame is an interpretation of a late Louis XV with applied Neoclassic corner ornaments.



1796 View of Black-Friars Bridge, Hand-colored engraving, published by I. Stockdale, London

This engraving is by Tagg after a painting by Edward Dayes, a noted painter of architecture and city scenes. During this time of war with France, various national Neoclassic interpretations developed throughout Western Europe since it was politically incorrect to copy French designs. The English continued using late eighteenth century motifs until the Reform Act of 1832.

The mat is a typical English model - dark green in color with a simple lines detail, harking back to seventeenth century Italian backing paper decoration. (see PFM, April 1993). The frame could certainly be labeled Louis XVI, but Neoclassic drawing frames were simple enough to be considered generic. This treatment is typical of the print rooms popular with wealthy, English connoisseurs of the period.



1799 View of Temple Bar, Engraving, published by I. Stockdale, London

This print, after a painting by Edward Dayes and engraved by Neagle, illustrates the popularity of Neoclassic architectural projects in England. In France, Napoleon Bonaparte, a popular young general, exploited political divisions and participated in a coup Nov. 1799, making himself consul (dictator). The French period from 1799 to 1804 is called Consulat.

The framing treatment is Continental Neoclassic. The mat is a gentle, brown-grey tone which complements the popular black & white prints. The frame, mahogany with black corner blocks and gold rosettes, is a replica of a German example of the period.



1807 Thomas Rowlandson, Miseries of Travelling, Hand-colored etching, published by Ackermann, London

Rowlandson is known for his humorous caricatures of well know people and outrageous artistic social commentary. This print is from one of the various Tours of Dr. Syntax. In 1804 Napoleon declared himself Emperor of France. Western Europe was confounded and angry at Napoleon - French was definitely 'out of style'.

The framing treatment is quintessential English Neoclassic. Although the mat owes much to eighteenth century French models, the expansion of the colored panel to an outwash, bordered by ink lines on the inside border only, is first seen on English examples from this period. The frame is a uniquely English combination of neoclassic ornament (bay & acanthus leaves, beads & fluted hollow) which was extremely popular both in England and in America.



Circa 1808 Oath To The Flag, Hand-colored lithograph by Charles E. P. Motte, published in Paris

This print, after a painting by Claude Gautherot, is titled "Serment au Drapeau devant Augsbourg" or Oath to the Flag in front of Augsbourg (Bavaria, .W. Germany). The new method of printmaking called lithography (printing from Bavarian limestone plates) had been invented in 1798 by Aloys Senefelder. In Germany and Austria the new medium did not stimulate any far-reaching response, but in France lithography came into its own. Stabilized conditions under

Napoleon encouraged artistic endeavor. Art was in demand and distinguished artists who were willing to try their hand with the new medium.

The style originating in France during Napoleon's reign as emperor (1804-1814) is called Empire. French taste from 1795 to 1825 is often described as 'Napoleonic'. The official colors of the Empire were white and gold, but vivid blues, yellows, crimson and greens were also popular. Furniture was characterized by rectangular forms, highly polished veneers, gilded mounts and a taste for black, grey or white marble. Napoleon banned the use and importation of mahogany in 1810 because it was an English import, usually from Cuba and South America. Local woods such as oak, olive, boxwood and cypress from Ceylon were subsequently used in great quantity. Symmetry and geometric motifs were emphasized. Ornamental elements were randomly borrowed from Greek (anthemion or honeysuckle flower was a favorite of the Empress Josephine, wife of Napoleon until 1809), Roman, Egyptian, Etruscan and Pompeiian sources. A precise and rather severe scoop molding with plaster cast ornaments in sharp designs became the Empire frame.

The mat is an interpretation in typical Empire colors. The frame replicates one at Malmaison.



Mr. Vere's Melon Thistle, Hand-colored engraving by Smith, published by S. Ridgway, London

This print , after a watercolor by Sydenham Edwards, originally appeared in Benjamin Mound's The Botanical Register, a subscription magazine. George IV was Prince Regent (acting ruler) from 1811 although he was not crowned king until the death of his father George III in 1820. Strictly speaking, the period from 1811 to 1820 is Regency, although British taste until the beginning of Queen Victoria's reign in 1837 is loosely called 'Regency'.

Napoleon abdicated as Emperor of France in 1814, attempted a 'come-back' and was finally defeated by the Duke of Wellington at the Battle of Waterloo, June 15, 1815 and was banished.

The following period, Restoration (1814-1824), saw the restoration of a Bourbon king, Louis XVIII , brother of Louis XVI.. French frames of this period were uninspired copies of earlier neoclassic designs.

The framing treatment is typical of English Regency designs of the period.



1831 The Tower Of London, Engraving by W. Miller, published by Longman, Rees et al, Edinburgh

This print, after a painting by J.M.W. Turner, is on an extremely thin, tissue-like paper called "India". This paper was prized by printmakers throughout the nineteenth century for it's ability to hold the finest details. Most India proofs were press-mounted onto heavier sheets for ease of handling and durability. (This print is not mounted)

William IV was King of England from 1830 to 1837. English styles were still essentially Regency and rosewood became extremely popular, but the dominant style in Northern Europe was called Biedermeier (1815-1848).

Austria was the center of the Biedermeier style, translated "of the common man". It was a severe neoclassic style of simplified forms, plain and unpretentious, mixing French Empire with English neoclassic (Hepplewhite and Sheritan). Plain, honey-colored woods (birch, maple and fruitwoods) accented with ebony or black typify Austrian Biedermeier furniture. By the 1830's, Gothic forms were introduced and became particularly important in England and France.

This extremely simple mat and frame bows to the Gothic Biedermeier style popular in England at this time.



1836 Wa-Em-Boesh-Kaa, A Chippeway Chief, Hand-colored lithograph, published by E.C. Biddle, Philadelphia

This print by Lehman & Duval is after a painting by Charles Bird King. At this time, portraits of Native Americans portrayed as "Noble Savages" were extremely popular. King set up a studio in Washington D.C. and brought many individuals from the frontier to have their "portraits" painted. Many of these so-called portraits of the period were displayed extensively in American and European cities. Queen Victoria of England, crowned in 1837, was keenly interested in the "exotic" and supported such exhibitions. The first photographic likeness was not invented until 1839 by Daguerre, so the world had to rely on an artist's rendition of the American Indian.

This period of American style is called American Empire (1820-1860), with a flourish of Greco-Roman revival styles from 1815 to 1835 (Duncan Phyfe). Frames were influenced by the deep, gilded scoop profiles of French Empire examples, but simplified to accommodate American tastes. These frames continue the eighteenth century American style called "Limner" - simple, unadorned cover profiles.

The mat is English in feeling, replicating a traditional outwash and using colored matboard for the inwash. The frame is a replica of an American frame of the period.



1843 The Bedale Hunt, Hand-colored engraving by William Henry Simmons, published in London

Mark Milbank Esquire of Yorkshire owned the original painting by Anson A. Martin. The gentlemen of his hunting club commissioned Graves & Warmsley, the esteemed London publishers, to make these prints for Milbank. Although the Victorian period officially began in 1837, Victorian style was not fully

influential until 1840 when Queen Victoria married Crown Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha (Germany). Early and Mid-Victorian (until 1860) styles utilized Neoclassic, Gothic, Moorish, and Renaissance designs. The mat is a replica of an English wrapped-paper mat of the period. Thin, manufactured cardboards were just becoming available, and these were covered with traditional laid watercolor papers and then decorated. The design is an English adaptation of a late eighteenth century French mat (see PFM, June 1993). The frame is a typical English Early and Mid-Victorian style.



1844 Snowy Owl Hand-colored lithograph, lithographed & published by J.T. Bowen, Philadelphia

This print, after the original watercolor painting by John James Audubon, is from the first Royal Octavo edition of *The Birds of North America*, Volume 6. Like the original Double Elephant Folio, these prints were sold in folios by subscription, arriving at various times over a period of years.

The mat is an adaptation of an English mat with an outwash and paper appliqué made of hand-marbled book-end paper. This particular paper was made by Cockerell & Son (England), a firm founded by the Cockerell's in the nineteenth century and still producing hand-marbled papers in original colors and patterns. The frame is a replica of a typical, simple American profile finished in silver leaf, a technique popular from about 1840 to 1890.

A tinted lacquer is applied over the silver leaf, producing a "gold" color similar to genuine gold leaf. However, compared side by side, the silver leafed frames have a peculiar coolness and period examples tend to show oxidization (tarnish) where the lacquer has been worn away.



1855 Map of Illinois Hand-colored engraving, published by J.H. Colton & Co., New York

This print was originally in an Atlas which was revised and reprinted many times as the world rapidly changed during the nineteenth century. Continent-wide revolutions in 1848 were caused by international collapse of credit and resulting unemployment, bad harvests, and a cholera epidemic. The new urban proletariat and expanding bourgeoisie demanded a greater political role. Republics were proclaimed in France, Rome and Venice. However, fears of socialism (Marx and Engels' 1848 Communist Manifesto) caused the lower classes to remain conservative. U.S. Commodore Matthew C. Perry had opened Japan to trade with the United States with a treaty ratified in 1854, but on the whole America remained isolated and disinterested in world politics.

This birdseye maple block-corner frame, often called a "Hicks" frame after the Pennsylvania minister/primitive painter Edward Hicks, is directly related to the severe, neoclassic Biedermeier styles of Europe. The mat is appropriately succinct.



Circa 1865 Milvus Migrans and Pandion Haliaetus Hand-colored lithographs, published by John Gould, London

These prints, drawn and lithographed by the team of J. Wolf, W. Hart and H.C. Richter, are from one of the early folios which comprised the monumental work *The Birds of Great Britain*, published between 1862 to 1873. After a second French Revolution in 1848, Louis Napoleon Bonaparte, nephew of Napoleon I, became president. In 1852, the period known as Second Empire began when he became Emperor Napoleon III. Second Empire tastes were adaptations of eighteenth century court styles (Louis XV & XVI). Queen Victoria and Napoleon III supported the First International Exhibition (the “Great Exhibition”) held in London in 1851, followed by Dublin in 1853, Paris in 1855, and a second London Exhibition in 1862.

The exhibitions were showcases for a nations industry and promoted uncritical enthusiasm for sophisticated mechanical techniques of manufacture and a taste for novelty for its own sake. Collecting in pairs (at least!) was the accepted practice. These ogee (S-shaped) birdseye maple veneer frames, with gilded liner, are typical English (not American) frames of the period. The mat replicates an English Victorian mat.



1873 Mount Shasta Engraving by E.P. Brandard, published by D. Appleton, New York

This print, after a painting by J.D. Smillie, is called a “steel-plate engraving”. Reproductions of artist’s originals of exotic locals, including the West, were extremely popular. The public’s appetite for the printed image had spurred publishers to devise a means of extending the life of the metal plates. This resulted in coating the copper plates with iron, providing a greatly increased plate life.

Unfortunately, many of the brown spots which appear on nineteenth century prints, generically called “foxing”, are actually tiny bits of iron embedded in the paper during printing and later rusting. The Civil War erupted when Fort Sumter was attacked April 1861. Abraham Lincoln, President, was re-elected in 1864. Ulysses Simpson Grant (President 1869-1877) accepted Robert E. Lee’s surrender at Appomattox on April 9, 1865 and Lincoln was assassinated on April 14. The Civil War had been economically draining to the North and devastating to the South. Another economic blow

occurred when the banks failed and panic began in September 1773. The resulting Depression lasted five years.

Although the newly wealthy entrepreneurs could afford the gaudy, Late Victorian styles in furnishings, the average American could not. The simpler styles which became popular during the Civil War continued to be utilized.

The mat imitates one which was extremely popular on prints at this time. A core of wood or wood and cardboard was wrapped with watercolor paper and lines were embossed into the paper around the window opening. The frame is similar to the wedge shaped, mahogany veneered frames often referred to as "Civil War Style", common from 1860 to 1900.



1884 Maurice Leloir Young Woman Reading Watercolor painted in France

This painting was on the frontispiece of a hand-printed, limited edition (50) book called "Sentimental Journey" by George Stern. Each book had an original watercolor! During the period from 1860 to 1880, the gilded, ornate and over-elaborate manufactures of Victorian Europe were challenged by the Arts & Crafts movement (William Morris) and allied Queen Anne revival and Aesthetic movement. By the 1880's, the Aesthetic style came under fire as obsessive and excessive - highly ornamented curvilinear furniture and decorative pieces were machine manufactured - a commercial decorator's style.

Toward the end of the century, reaction to the excesses of Victorian style resulted in a new purist approach with an emphasis on the superiority of French taste and good proportions based on classic French and Italian architectural principals. 1880's England saw rooms become more austere with antique furniture, watercolors with wide white mats in plain gold frames. Paris of the 1890's saw an eighteenth century revival (Beaux-Arts) with white painted furniture, blue mats and gold frames. The mat is a replica of an English adaptation of an eighteenth century French mat. The frame is an adaptation of a Louis XV drawing frame.



Circa 1900 Sir D.Y. Cameron Perth Bridge Etching, printed in Glasgow

This print illustrates the renewed public interest in fine prints at the end of the century. During this time many groups of artists and writers expounded on the virtues of hand pulled prints, resulting in many art magazines and books about prints, not to mention the editions of prints themselves.

Although the trend toward simplicity and hand-crafted items had already begun,

The Decoration of Houses by Edith Wharton and Ogden Codman published in 1897 made simple, uncluttered, coherent schemes the fashion. By the time Queen Victoria died in 1901, the 'Modern Style' (Art Neuveau) was the dominant trend. This framing treatment replicates those popular at this time for fine prints, drawings and watercolors - off-white or light cream mats and narrow, gilt frames.



1917 William M. Birchall The King's Fighting Ships Watercolor, painted in England

Birchall was American, born in 1884, but as a young man shipped out to England as a purser on the P&O Line. His "hobby" was watercolor painting and he is noted for the 'on-the-spot' scenes in the English Channel during the war. Archduke Franz Ferdinand was assassinated in 1914, precipitating the First World War, or the 'Great War' (1914-1918). This same year the Panama Canal was opened.

In 1917 Czar Nicholas II of Russia was assassinated and Civil War erupted (1917-1922). By 1920, nearly all bounds of subject matter, style and attitude had been broken in the arts - Abstraction, Dadaism, Surrealism, etc.. For the first time in English history, gold frames were out of fashion. Frames were finished in silver and white-grey.

For this reason many historians consider silver frames inappropriate on artwork of the nineteenth century and earlier.

The mat is a replica of an English 'wash line mount' of this period. The frame, a typical American-English drawing frame profile, is finished in white gold over dark blue clay - a non-tarnishing "silver".



1934 Edward Weston Old Adobe, Carmel Valley Gelatin Silver Print, printed in Carmel, California

This photograph is typical of this period in Weston's career. He split his time between the Monterey peninsula and Mexico, exploring architectural ruins.

The Arts & Crafts style, rooted in nineteenth century England, was interpreted and modified by American craftsmen and extremely popular until the end of WWI when more modern trends began to take hold (Art Deco, 1925). In 1893 the Greene brothers (architects) moved to Pasadena and were inspired by the crude simplicity of early Franciscan mission architecture and subsequently the Mission Style was born. The Wall Street Stock Market crashed in 1929 and the Great Depression followed.

Hand-carved gold leafed frames were not in great demand, so frame makers devised numerous painted finishes compounded from "bronze" powders and various oily mediums. When new, these finishes were bright and golden. The dark, mellow tones we are familiar with are a result of time and oxidation, not intent! Traditionally, due to geographic location, California has been slow to embrace new Eastern styles. Simple oak profiles, reeded "Whistler" adaptations and Mission styles with modified Art Deco ornaments were popular well into the 1940's.

The simple, white mat is typical of the period. The dark, bronze finish frame is typical of California Mission Style with an Art Deco influence in the corner carving.



Circa 1940 Robert Sargent Austin Gothic Lady Etching, printed in England

The twentieth century brought unwelcome changes for artists. They were forced to deal with a world apparently indifferent to their condition and welfare, to reinterpret the old patterns of collector, patron and dealer, and to come to terms with society economically as well as esthetically. Austin, born in 1895, tried to ignore the stress and turmoil (First World War 1914-1918 & Second World War 1939 -1945) by holding fast to traditional, medieval modes of expression and subject matter.

The mat is an adaptation of sixteenth century French and Italian decorated backing papers (see PFM, August 1993). The frame is a simplified adaptation of a Northern Gothic frame (see #2, Albrecht Durer).



1946 Mel Mathewson War Memorial Opera House India Ink Wash with Opaque White, painted in San Francisco, California

Mathewson, an illustrator, was commissioned to paint the newly completed Opera House for the September 1946 issue of San Francisco Life Magazine.

This was a period of momentous changes. The Nuclear Age began August 6, 1945 when the United States dropped the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan. The first meeting of the United Nations General Assembly occurred in 1946. The Polaroid camera was invented in 1947. In 1948 Mahatma Ghandi was assassinated, long-playing records ("LP's") were invented and microwave cooking developed. Harry S. Truman was President (1945 to 1953) and Queen Elizabeth II of England was crowned. World changes not withstanding,

California framing styles were slightly antiquated. The turn-of-the-century styles inspired by James McNeill Whistler continued to be extremely popular!

The mat is a modern interpretation combining elements from earlier French and English examples. The frame is an adaptation of a reeded "Whistler" profile.



1971 K. Anderson Heaven, Hell & Acid In Between Etching, printed in California

This print illustrates the artistic freedoms allowed art students in the '60's and early '70's. The subject also reflects the conflicts prevalent in American society.

The Vietnam War (1959-1975) was an integral part of everyday life. The now infamous "Summer of Love" in San Francisco (1967) was a short-lived fantasy. The following spring Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy were assassinated. Student riots and demonstrations against the Vietnam War abounded in the U.S. and Europe.

Even the first man on the moon (U.S., 1969) couldn't mitigate the war's impact. Finally, in 1974, President Richard M. Nixon was forced to resign over the Watergate Scandal and the war officially ceased the following year.

The contemporary framing treatment was selected by the artist. The mat has been decorated with a paper appliqué executed by the artist; the frame is hand-crafted in ebony.



1980 Kyu-Baik Hwang Three Grinders Color Mezzotint, printed in New York

Hwang, a Korean artist working in New York, is most noted for his unique, high-key mezzotints featuring traditional Oriental objects.

Traditional modes in painting, architecture and music returned to popular and critical attention in the 1970's. Conservative styles coexisted with modernist works in an atmosphere of tolerance. During the 1970's and 80's, many contemporary fine printmakers rediscovered the eighteenth century technique of mezzotint.

The mat combines contemporary materials and style, yet owes a debt to the nineteenth century use of marbled book-end papers (see PFM, August 1993). The frame style is turn-of-the-century American Impressionist, often referred to as 'Hassam' (after Childe Hassam), but finished in a highly aged, distressed manner, totally appropriate with this timeless image.



1989 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles Painted animation cel

This extremely contemporary form of 'art' proves the point that something old can be new again. The simple line pattern used on the 1498 Albrecht Durer wood engraving (#2) is repeated, this time on a "television" gray mat. The 8 ply rag inner mat, finished appear "silver leafed", adds a modern, high tech feeling and relates to the unquestionably contemporary white gold frame.



Circa 1830 Utagawa Kunisada A Dressing Room Nishiki-e, printed in Japan

Japanese woodblock prints from approximately 1688 until the Meiji restoration in 1868 are called Ukiyo-e, "floating world pictures". Nishiki-e, "brocade pictures", were the first true polychrome prints and appeared in 1765. Ukiyo-e were not framed but rather kept in folios to be brought out, enjoyed, and then replaced like a book.

Traditional Japanese architecture did not include solid walls and very few images, usually scrolls, were suspended from cords attached to hooks over the ceiling joist.

Ukiyo-e became the rage in England after the International Exhibition of 1862.

The Philadelphia Exposition of 1876 brought European Arts & Crafts and Aesthetic movements to America, along with the "Cult of Japan" or Japonisme, whose strongest proponents were James McNeill Whistler and Edward W. Godwin. Ukiyo-e were collected and framed in Western style both in Europe and America at this time, but not in Japan. Framing evolved slowly, as western influences set in and architectural traditions changed. Western-style framing emerged during the early twentieth century, but the major influence occurred after the Second World War.

The mat, with the "floating" marbled paper (no ink lines) is reminiscent of the brocade borders applied to the scroll mountings for traditional Japanese paintings (see PFM, August 1993). The frame is an extremely simple contemporary profile, gilded only on the narrow face, in keeping with traditional Japanese esthetics.



1992 Brian Wolf Turtle Mat Art

This intricately hand-carved and painted piece was created as a twentieth anniversary gift for friends. In this example, the mat has literally become the art.