

TRU VUE ANNOUNCES
FINALISTS IN ITS 2ND
ANNUAL FRAMING
COMPETITION

MCCOOK, IL—Tru Vue announces the finalists for the Second Annual Tru Vue Framing Competition: **Sarah Beckett of SB Framing Gallery**, Milwaukee, WI; **Myrna Dow of High Desert Frameworks!**, Bend, OR; **Kosal Eang of Framed by Kosal**, Monroe, CT; and **Donna Erwin of Columbia River Gallery**, Troutdale, OR. All four finalists' work will be showcased at the Tru Vue booth (#605) at the West Coast Art & Frame Expo. The awards are Best In Show Judges' Choice Award, Best In Show Attendees' Choice Award, and Facebook Fans' Choice Award. WCAF Expo attendees can vote for the finalists and also be entered for a chance to win one of the 12 raffle prizes. Visit Tru Vue's Facebook page to see the finalists' work and get updates at: www.facebook.com/TruVueGlazing, or call (800) 621-8339.

UNIVERSAL ARQUATI
WEBSITE LAUNCHES

SANTA CLARITA, CA—**Universal Arquati** launches a new website designed to provide user-friendly experience at: www.universalarquati.com. A new "wish list" feature allows customers to save their favorites and e-mail them to family and friends. The new zooming tool enhances the viewing of moulding and can be used by simply hovering the mouse over the product. The site also introduces an improved search tool to help filter and navigate through all of Universal Arquati's products. Call (800) 668-3627 for details, or: www.universalarquati.com.

FRAMING: WAYS TO GENERATE BUSINESS

by Sarah Seamark

Custom framers are finding innovative ways to bring in more customers and show them the benefits of having their artwork framed uniquely. From the high end to the lower end, they are finding ways to generate more business in a still challenged marketplace.

Through word-of-mouth referrals, Brentano's in the SoHo district of Manhattan has gained recognition as a framer of choice among the younger, highly successful set who want fine framing for their acquisitions of Modern Masters. Likewise, Marty Smith, owner of Middleton Art & Framing in Middleton, WI, says, "I have a lot of younger, professional customers, and they think nothing of spending \$1,000 for a frame. I also have affluent middle class customers in their late 40s, early 50s, who continue to frame at a high level. They spend \$800 and don't bat an eye. These customers have been framing for some time and want to preserve everything for the long term. Framing is about preserving, and you have to spend a little more to do that."

At the same time, Matt Puchalski, owner of Masterpiece Framing in Bloomington, IL, has seen an increase at his business for no frills, less expensive framing. In addition to his brick-and-mortar store, he has a website: www.basicblackframe.com that is dedicated to getting market share from the likes of Michaels and other framing chains. In business 10 years, Mr. Puchalski says, "We heard a request over

and over in our first five years from people wanting a simple black frame—not super high-end—just to get art on the wall: poster art, family photos, or reproductions from a digital file. And that was my reason for launching the website, to offer three simple black profiles and either foamcore backing or nothing at all, acrylic glazing, and no mat." The average ticket is \$75. The website generates a lot

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seum Glass, but I have seen an increase in the lower end framing."

Matt Puchalski, an artist in his own right, says the framing industry has been very kind to him "and I am able to have a good living." He went to school for fine art, and as a way to support himself, went into the framing business. Just this past month, Mr. Puchalski went from renting a 2,200-square-foot



Brentano's Inc. located in New York's SoHo district.

of corporate business, he says, and sales have remained steady.

Meanwhile, his brick-and-mortar store attracts residential traffic. The demographic of the average customer is female, in her 50s or 60s who is a homeowner. The average income in the area served by Masterpiece Framing is \$80,000. "We bring in people who might go to Michaels, but we do more complex jobs such as shadow boxes for framing three dimensional objects like a sports jersey."

Overall, he says, "We still have an upper echelon of higher end customers that want suede mats and Mu-

space in a strip mall that did not offer good visibility, to purchasing a 3,000-square-foot space on a main road with great exposure. His monthly mortgage check is similar to his rent check. In the long term, he says, if a framer can afford to purchase their premises it's a good way to go.

Elida Scola, owner of Galleria Scola in Oakland, CA, in business 30 years, says she has not seen much change in the price of custom framing "because we never did discount." She says her business is going really well, "better than ever. I think that is because I try to

continued on page 32

FOTIOU FRAMES ENTERS AUSTRALIAN MARKET, PARTNERING WITH EVOLUTION FRAMING

WOODBIDGE, ONTARIO—**Fotiou Frames** is expanding its market reach to Australia through a new partnership with distributor **Evolution Framing Supplies** in New South Wales. Led by Ash E. Harmis, Evolution is stocking selections from the Fotiou line adding accessibility to a range of moulding styles previously unavailable in Australia.

Carlos Rodriguez, Executive Vice President for Fotiou Frames, says, "We are very happy to welcome Evolution Framing Supplies as our newest distribution partner. By developing this partnership, Fotiou products will be readily accessible to the fine art, décor, and other markets for framed products throughout Australia, an exciting new territory for us." For more information, call Fotiou Frames at (800) 668-8420 or go to the website: www.fotiou.com.

DECOR MOULDING & SUPPLY AND SOUTHERN MOULDING'S NEW SALES REP FOR ATLANTA AREA

HAUPPAUGE, NY—**Decor Moulding & Supply** and **Southern Moulding** have announced the appointment of Debbie Hammond to the role of sales representative for all of the metro Atlanta area. Ms. Hammond brings a retail and wholesale background to her new position. Contact her directly at (770) 422-3949, extension 156; or via e-mail: dhammond@decormoulding.com. To reach Decor, phone (800) 937-1055 or go to: www.decormoulding.com.

FRAMING continued from page 30

network—it's at the top of my list along with passion and commitment." As we concluded the interview, Ms. Scola was off to a Rotary Club meeting. "That is one organization I would highly recommend. It helps me indirectly in that it broadens my horizon and allows me to see what is going on in business worldwide." She also has got many customers through Rotary. "Many people who leave the club, don't leave me as a framer," she says.

To augment her networking efforts, Ms. Scola has drastically increased her social media efforts, and has a blog through her website. The number one driver of clients, she finds, is Yelp. "People go to Yelp and see

me listed, and read my reviews which are very good. I have a coupon where they pay \$40 for \$100 of framing. But I get some money back for each coupon, so the discount is not as steep. Young affluents from Oakland are finding us through Yelp, and we convert them—and they pay

more for framing the next time. What we do is make their first frame very quickly, (when the customer has framing on their mind) and

then often when they come in to pick it up, they bring something else in."

An average ticket price at Galleria Scola is \$350. An indicator she uses to see how business is going is to count the number of closed corner frames she sells per month. "It used to be two or three, and now it is about six." She only sells a closed corner frame about 5% of the time, but with every sale she raises the consciousness of her clients to the difference between moulding in length and closed corners. She also walks them through conservation framing materials, including rag mat and Tru Vue's Conservation Clear and Museum Glass. "We sell one of those two, or Optium Acrylic. My goal



Erin McGroarty, chief framer at Middleton Art & Framing, Middleton, WI, designed this frame, measuring 40 by 75 inches, for a large painting. The wood moulding is Larson-Juhl's Marais II in black, and the fillet is Roma's La Contessa in Raven Black.



"A New Day I" by Matt Puchalski, artist and owner of Masterpiece Framing, Bloomington, IL. The giclée on canvas, edition of 95 with a 32- by 32-inch image, sells for \$975, (www.mattsart.com). The mouldings are from Larson-Juhl. From the outer edge, they are: Hudson, gold; Ascot, medium brown; Rubens, red; and the fillet is Academie, gold.

would be to sell more acrylic because it can't break which is so important with original paintings, but it is substantially more expen-

sive. I'm hoping the price will come down."

Marc Fattahi, also an artist as well as owner of Fattahi's Frame & Art Gallery in Stamford, CT, finds many people no longer frame, but buy readymade frames from chain stores. "We rarely see people now who have been on vacation, bought a print, and want it framed. But high-end framing still exists." He also finds that corporate business is starting to move a little. "I don't see \$300 framing jobs much any more," he says, "but I do see \$1,200, \$1,500, and even \$2,000 now. These are people making good money, mostly working in the city, with an average age of 35 to 50. Their wives come in (to the shop) because they are remodeling their homes, and they are buying quality pieces. We used to produce

continued on page 52

FRAMING BUSINESS

FRAMING continued from page 32

150 frames a week, now it is five to 10, but 90% are high end with finished corners, metal and gold leaf.”

Mr. Fattahi says he can't remember when he last framed a child's art piece. There are so many framing websites where people can go, he notes. "If I didn't have art to sell, I couldn't survive on the framing," he says. And in order to sell the art, he finds he needs to put it in a very high end frame, such as the 22-karat white gold leaf frame, shown at right, housing his own painting, "Far Away in My Mind."

Joseph Brentano of Brentano's in Manhattan, with 33 years in the industry, says his average price for custom framing is about \$1,500. His clientele used to be the older generation, but now he sees less and less of them. His audience today is the younger demographic who can afford to have something framed properly.

And he does not hesitate to upsell, offering Museum Glass or Optium Acrylic. "The glass does add to the bottom line. And you have to lead by example, so 95% of what we display in Brentano's is framed with Optium Museum Acrylic, and I leave one framed with ordinary glass so the customer sees the difference. We do use glass, as well,

on smaller pieces, but we recommend acrylic because it won't shatter—most museums use acrylic." Many of his clients are collectors of Warhol, Haring, Lichtenstein, Basquiat, and other Modern Masters. "They see it as a financial investment. I try to tell them the

is framed. *Entrepreneur* magazine has also published an article on one of Mr. Brentano's clients. But, he continues, "The best advertisement is word-of-mouth, doing a great job, and standing behind it, and then people tell their friends."



Marc Fattahi of Fattahi's Frame & Art Gallery in Stamford, CT, finds that high-end framing helps sell art. This oil painting by Fattahi, "Far Away in My Mind," measuring 72 by 24 inches, sells for \$12,000. It is housed in a float frame made of 22-karat white gold leaf moulding. The frame's retail price is \$2,500 and the wholesale price, \$800.

opposite, but they have advisors who tell them to put their money in Blue Chip art."

In addition to word-of-mouth, Brentano's has received some high profile publicity over the years, which also helps bring in customers. Last year, they were mentioned in the *Robb Report* in an article on one of their clients who has a vast collection of music memorabilia, some of which

Marty Smith of Middleton Art & Framing says those that are spending more on framing are often intending to keep it for a very long time. He rationalizes that you could change your living room furniture much more often than a frame "because you buy the frame you like and live with it for ever. Some people say they want lower quality framing and they will live with it, but others pay an appropriate

amount for conservation-grade materials because they are in it for the long haul."

Mr. Smith says business is going well, and that he was up 48% last year, and is up 52% this year already. He attributes much of the success to continuing to build his customer base, particularly repeat customers. He advertises with a coupon in a circular that goes to 50,000 local households. He supports several charitable organizations through Middleton Art & Framing, and has done a little TV advertising.

"We are very big players in Groupon, and were one of the first in the area. We have a lot of people coming in through Groupon and we try to sell them what they like. But we do educate them. They could buy a frame at Target for \$50, and we tell them about custom-made frames, and explain that that is what you are paying for." He says about 40% come back.

Mr. Smith employs two full-time and two part-time framers, "and nothing gets out of here with a nick on it. You have to have very high standards." He takes photos of the customer with their frame and puts it on Facebook, as well as on the website. "You need all that. You can't have a successful business unless you have repeat customers."