

Framed to perfection

If you've invested hours in taking the perfect image and printed it on premium photographic paper, why not display it in a hand-crafted frame? I talked to a professional framer about the advantages of bespoke frames

WORDS Sarah Reed **PICTURES** ashworthphotography.co.uk

I'm terrible when it comes to printing my photos. Dozens of pictures have been sitting in a folder on my laptop called 'to print' for months now. However, once in a while, I take a picture that I like so much that I have to get it printed immediately. And if it's going to be hung on the wall in my flat then it has to look good, which means investing in a bespoke frame.

My dad is a trained carpenter, which is probably where my love of high-quality, hand-made woodwork comes from. I had two pictures professionally framed for the first time earlier last year and I still think that it was money well spent.

To find out more about bespoke frames, I talked to Kevin Jones, who has worked at the framing company Simon Robinson & Son in Cambridgeshire for five years. Kevin studied illustration at university and is a keen amateur photographer, so I knew that he was the right person to talk to about framing photographs. To begin with, I asked Kevin why people should buy bespoke frames?

"With bespoke frames, you get more choice," Kevin said. "At Simon Robinson & Son we have a selection of over 700 frames, we can offer different glass options and we can frame to any size specifications. The size proportions are an important consideration for framing. I often see people try to squeeze their pictures into standard off-the-shelf frames from shops and it doesn't always do the image justice. A photograph that someone



cares about deserves quality framing to make the most of it and to protect it for years to come.

"All of the materials we use that are in contact with the images are acid-free (also called conservation materials). Using materials that aren't acid-free can distort the colours in images and make them look dull. You'll also find that the edges of the mount will turn brown. We also seal everything to help prevent dust and thunderbugs from getting behind the glass."

Expert advice is a key part of what you are paying for when you get your pictures framed professionally. I asked Kevin what tips he could give photographers who are thinking about framing their favourite images. "We tend to keep frames simple for photographs, as the image is the most important part. When art is framed,

"A photograph that someone cares about **deserves quality framing to protect it for years to come**"

Above
Left to right: Lester Robinson (the 'Son' in Simon Robinson & Son) and Kevin Jones in the shop.

Right
An aluminium frame being cut with a chop saw in the workshop.

Below
All of the frames are hand-made on the premises by Lester or Kevin.



however, the frame is an integral part of the artwork.

"All photos should be mounted so that the glass doesn't touch the print, and they are also useful for adding space around an image. Spacing helps to isolate the photograph, which is particularly important if you are hanging it on a busy and cluttered wall. Mountings always have a bias, with the bottom edge being thicker than the other sides. This is because of an optical illusion when a mounting of equal thickness on all four sides is used: it looks like the image is closer to the bottom of the frame.

"Using a fairly thick mounting – at least 2.5 inches – with a thin frame is a classic look for photographs. And black



Framing tips

- ✓ Keep frames simple so that they don't distract from your images – the photograph is the most important part.
- ✓ For black & white images, use black or silver aluminium frames. For colour photographs, opt for natural wood or gold frames.
- ✓ Make sure that any materials that touch the photograph are acid-free, otherwise they could distort the colours in your picture.
- ✓ Always use a mount to add space around your picture. This is particularly important if you are hanging your photograph on a cluttered wall.
- ✓ Choosing non-reflective glass will remove annoying light reflections. It's also important to use glass that will protect your photograph from UV light.

core mount board, which is white on the outside but has a black interior, gives a more dramatic look for black & white images. Black or silver aluminium frames are also popular for black & white photography. For colour photos, natural wood and gold frames are better choices, as they help to bring out the colours.

"The best glass to use when framing photographs is clear, non-reflective UV filtering glass. As well as protecting your photos from the colour-bleaching effect of sunlight, this type of glass won't distort images; standard glass will introduce a subtle green tint to an image."

Digital frames are becoming increasingly popular these days. But what does a professional framer think about these techy alternatives to traditional frames? "I like digital frames and I think there is a place for them. However, they

aren't appropriate if you would like to frame large photographs, or if you want to display multiple pictures around your house."

By now, you're probably thinking 'this all sounds great, but how much is a bespoke frame going to cost me?' "Our prices for bespoke frames start from £45 for an 8x6 photograph with a simple natural wood frame, a 2-inch mount and standard glass. Framing for larger pictures with more expensive frames and glass options can cost two to three hundred pounds.

"But as an amateur photographer myself, I think the quality of the frame is important and I always want to display my images at their best." ☒

■ 01223 873123 / 0845 6170353
■ www.robinsonframes.co.uk

Above
Simon Robinson & Son have more than 700 frames and offer friendly advice to help you make the right choice.

Below
A mitre is cut into the wooden frame with a guillotine.



Win a bespoke frame for one of your photos!

We're offering one lucky reader the chance to have their favourite photograph framed by Simon Robinson & Son, up to a value of £120 (including VAT). The winner will have a 2-inch mount around their photo, which can be up to A4 in size, a quality frame and clear, non-reflective UV filtering glass.

To be in with a chance of winning, simply answer this question: **How many frames do Simon Robinson & Son offer? A) 50 B) 200 C) 700+**

Entries must be received by 4 February 2009. Please send your entries on a postcard to: Frame competition, *Digital SLR User*, Bright House, 82 High Street, Sawston, Cambridge, CB22 3HJ.