

Style Snapshot

A look at a frame, its characteristics, and history

by Peter Werkhoven

What style frame is this? This is a Modernist frame, based upon several historic forms.

Where is it from? It was created by Marcel Fleury who is a master framemaker and designer working in Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

What time period is it from? Fleury came up with this design around 1998.

Who was instrumental in developing this style of frame? Essentially, this frame is simply a magnified, double lamb's tongue pattern done on a bolection shape profile.

The lamb's tongue motif is an architectural ornament that originated in ancient Greece. Kymatheon is possibly the name by which it was known. It was adopted into the western neo-classical architecture, and was subsequently utilized in framemaking, usually as a sight edge or outer edge ornament.

The bolection profile is known to have originated in the 1500s in Spain. The use of this profile gives the frame its overall "Spanish feel," however the relatively low-relief of the carving displays a more Italian sensibility.

These differing elements and inspirations have been blended and reshaped into an original, modernist frame design.

What are the defining/common characteristics of this style?

Even though the relief of the carving is low, the gray-black bole underneath the 23 karat gold emphasizes the cuts and creates more visual depth to the frame. This, in combination with the rhythmic, light reflecting nature of the carving itself, achieves a very dramatic effect.

What design departures might be seen on some frames of this style?

Actually, this frame is itself a design departure!



The Fleury frame features a double lamb's tongue pattern done on a bolection shape profile.



Detail of the lamb's tongue pattern.

Photo's courtesy of Aedicle Fine Framemaking, San Francisco

(Continued from page 112)

What furnishing/interior styles accompanied these style frames in their time? This is a contemporary frame, and so it harmonizes most naturally in a similar interior. However, since it is based on a classical design, there may be some elasticity in the range of interior styles to which this frame is suited.

What type of artwork would this frame most likely house? This frame will augment abstract and cubist artworks as well as mirrors.

Additional comments and/or anecdotes Fleury is one of a small, new generation of craftsman framemakers who are not content to merely recreate standard historical frame styles.

But did dedication to historical significance play a role in the birth of this frame? "Ironically, that was not my original intention," Fleury explains when asked how the frame evolved. "I started experimenting with some carving, just to see what would come out of my hands. After a while, I recognized that the pattern I was making was similar to lamb's tongue ornament, and so I enhanced that aspect of it, to make it more recognizable as such. Later on I consciously played up the Spanish and Italian effects, to layer different styles together."

Fleury continues, "There is a different process every time you create an original frame. Sometimes the frame emerges into a pretty traditional model, and sometimes it is completely off-the-wall, if you'll forgive my pun. This particular frame was fun for me, because the history sort of came in through the back door." ■



This contemporary frame is ideal for housing abstract and cubist artworks as well as mirrors.



Peter Werkhoven is co-owner of Aedicule Fine Framemaking in San Francisco. Mr. Werkhoven is originally from Amsterdam, the Netherlands, and moved to the U.S. a few years ago. His frames can be found in the Rijksmuseum and the Van Gogh Museum, as well as in the homes of many European collectors. He can be reached at pwerkhoven@comcast.net.