



## Local Glamour: Make the Frame Worthy of the Portrait

By Constance Dunn

An excellent and very glamorous gift to give to another, or even yourself, is a personal photograph. For this, no stray snapshot or stiff headshot will do -- it must be a *portrait*. A professionally executed image that shows you at your most pleasing, a portrait is a private and special thing, with the best ones revealing some unique truth about you.

Acquiring the perfect portrait is only half the equation, however. The other half consists of outfitting your image with the right frame. Do not dream of squeezing your portrait into a chintzy, pre-fabricated frame and handing it off to your beloved.

Your portrait should be archived appropriately. This means using the proper materials, including a custom mat, glass and hand-cut frame, all selected with the eye of an artist. This is the job of a custom framer, who can help select, then hand-assemble these materials around your image or artwork. The image will last longer when put together properly.

Reviewing some lovely family portraits taken in the early-20th century, I lamented over the fact that some were irreparably damaged. The discoloration, cracks and blurring were not just the result of time, but of improper handling and protection.

My frame-consciousness raised, I visited Jeff Dion, owner of Dion Gallery in Riviera Village, to learn about the best ways to display and preserve our most important images.

Dion, who has been custom framing in the South Bay for nearly three decades, shared some key considerations:

**Consider the environment.** Think about where your portrait will be displayed. Propped on a sleek desk at your boyfriend's ultra-modern office? Hung over the mantle of your parent's cozy, antique-laden living room? The frame should not just enhance the portrait; it should fit with its surroundings, complementing the style, furnishings and colors of the room where it will be seen.

**Determine size and staging.** Do you want your portrait to loom large in a room, or be subdued and under-the-radar visually? This will help determine the size and type of frame you will need. The frame needed to capture center stage in a grand room filled with leather, gold and mahogany, for instance, will

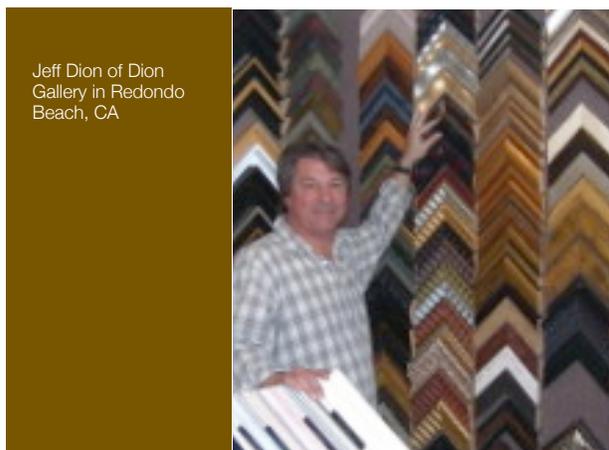
be vastly different than the one needed to quietly highlight the portrait placed in the corner of a back bedroom.

**Age-proof your portrait.** Blame the deterioration of your artwork and images on culprits like heat, pollution, moisture and poor framing. Dion, who has rescued many images from substandard framing, recommends archival framing for items you wish to preserve for the long haul. Archival framing relies on special materials to protect images from the elements, such as acid-free mats and UV-protection glass.

**Select your framer with care.** Look for a custom framing shop that focuses solely on custom framing, instead of one that offers it as a side service. And the person behind the counter should be more than a disinterested order taker.

"Getting a portrait framed is a very personal process," said Dion, who likens custom framing to hand tailoring a garment, or cutting and styling hair. As both an art and a craft, the best practitioners understand both the technical and aesthetic sides of their discipline.

To guide you to the best frame for your needs, the framer should not just be experienced, Dion points out, but should know what questions to ask and, most importantly, know how to listen.



Jeff Dion of Dion  
Gallery in Redondo  
Beach, CA