

# Creative CMC Designs

*Specialized matting designs created with computerized mat cutters can set framers apart from the competition and build customer loyalty*

## The 13.1-Mile Challenge

*Crescent-Valiani CMC*

**P**icture framers are faced with challenges almost every day, but this particular project began with a much bigger challenge that took over six months to complete. Before Dave Wetterstroem, owner of FrameMakers of Powell, OH, could pull the first corner sample off the wall, he had to train his body to be able to run the 13.1 miles of a half marathon.

After the race, Dave gathered up all the items he had collected and laid them out on the design counter. He carefully arranged each item to be included, and then measured them to digitally recreate the design in Corel Draw. The distance of a marathon, be it full or half-length, is an iconic number that runners proudly display, so Dave naturally wanted to include this statistic into his design.

Once the openings for the photos and the floated objects had been designed, the “13.1” was added to the top two layers of matting. Dave made sure that the numbers didn’t cover anything of importance, while still balancing them with the visual weight of the award medal and runner’s bib. This was simply done by using the font tool and digitally “welding” the numbers to the mat opening. The contour tool quickly turned this design into a double mat.

The Corel design was then exported as a PLT file to Dave’s Valiani CMC for cutting. Once imported into the Valiani V-Studio software, layers were assigned and the job was ready to cut with the green 40° head. “To match the vibrancy and saturation of the medal and bib colors, I chose Crescent Vintage Ruby Linen (7565) for the top mat with Crescent Pickle (9526) and Crescent Spinach (9531) as under mats,” Dave says. “This provided the color spectrum I was looking for.”

He also cut a black foamboard spacer using the same layout as the top mat layer but done with the yellow 90-degree head on his Valiani CMC. Having a spacer that is



*The 13.1 mile distance of a half marathon was highlighted in a shadowbox created by Dave Wetterstroem, capturing his experience in running the race.*

perfectly contoured to the mat adds stability to the numbers so they won’t warp or curl over time.

“The photo and map were hinged to the backing, while the ribbon was attached using an Avery tagging gun,” he says. “For the medal itself, 3M VHB tape was used to hold it in place. The bib was hinged to the top surface, overlapping the ribbon, and the race pin was pressed into the mat along with a small piece of the 3M VHB tape so it wouldn’t spin around once positioned.”

With a strong design inside the frame, Dave wanted mouldings with simple profiles so they wouldn’t visually conflict with the matting design. Dave ended up stacking Presto Limeade Soda Pop (7917) over Larson-Juhl Tribeca (200285) to give the overall frame design some punch and contrast.

Dave adds, “Even though I ran the race like I was a turtle crawling through peanut butter, I still crossed the finish line—and so can anyone.”

His frame is now proudly displayed in his gallery as an inspirational example of what can be achieved when framers accept challenges, be they personal or framing ones.

# An Evocative Touch

Wizard CMC

**O**ksana Yurova has a frame shop in a charming resort town in southern Russia called Pyatigorsk. From the earliest days of her framing career, she has explored decoration and has developed a devoted following among needlework artists in Russia and other countries with her creative ideas. Her experiences developing and using designs are full of interesting twists.

“I want my designs to make my customers’ work look even more beautiful, but it surprised me how often I was asked to invent a design to cover a mistake in the work. I designed overlaying elements to mask the flaws, and my clients were amazed with the results. But whether the design covers a mistake or is just an ornament, I am always pleased to be part of the creativity,” says Oksana.

Oksana’s first love is music. She was a professional musician and taught piano for many years. It is natural that she sees relationships within an art piece in terms of a solo and accompaniment. “Whether it is a singer and an orchestra, or art and its presentation, all the parts should be in harmony and beautifully played,” she says.

Her musical education also impressed upon her the concept that music is evocative and seldom literal. The ornaments in this example are good illustrations of her philosophy. There is not literal repetition of the feathers or outlines of a swan. Rather, the decoration is evocative of shimmering water, graceful motion, and the romance of swans in legends from fairy tales to Wagner.

The opening shape began as a template that includes arcs at the top and bottom. Oksana drew a flowing pattern of curves and circles at the corners using PathTrace. These curves were simplified into the cutouts on the top layer of the mat. There was a secondary inspiration, and many of the leftover curves were formed into shapes that were cut out, then applied onto the mat. These pieces were cut using a slightly darker matboard. The idea is that they are used to add depth, complexity, and a feeling of dimension to the cutout shapes.

Perhaps the Russian way of design is different, but Oksana’s question is: “How can there be elegance and romance without jewels?” The “sapphires and diamonds” on the mat are faceted glass beads. “Sometimes the cut work of the CMC is not enough,” she adds. “I really like using more



*The mat for this counted cross-stitch was designed by Oksana Yurova, a framer from Pyatigorsk in southern Russia. The fanciful patterns of curves and circles at the corners were drawn in PathTrace and cut as small openings and appliques on the top layer of the mat. Musical ideas drive the designs, and harmony and counterpoint are more important than repetitions of shapes in the piece.*



colorful dramatic accents, bringing out the relief and volume. I work out my own style, decorating the mat with beads, sequins, fabric, threads, and ribbons.”

Many of Oksana’s designs for framing needlework include decorative openings in the mat with a pattern of threads stitched and woven behind them. There are often beads and other colorful three-dimensional accents worked into these threads.

“Back in the days when I cut everything by hand,” Oksana remembers, “it was very tiresome, and I was not always able to fulfill what I wanted to show. I felt limited in reaching my wishes. But when I bought a Wizard in 2008, it was as if a whole new world of decoration and design opened.”

It is instructive to see how a framer from halfway around the world approaches the details of decoration. The process of using a CMC to draw unique designs and invent decorative matting isn’t so different no matter where a framer works. But when the inspirations come from a different direction and the details from another culture are added in, the final effect is bound to be different. It’s also good to hear that customers everywhere embrace individualized work.



# A Doctor Who Creation

Gunnar CMC

Anita McNab owns Design Framing, a boutique custom framing store in a high-street promenade of Essendon, an inner-city suburb of Melbourne, Australia. Starting her framing career over 15 years ago, Anita became one of the youngest framers to embrace the new technology of computerized mat cutting. Her strong passion for creative framing and matting began on an original Gunnar Rapido, and in recent years she has upgraded to a Gunnar F1 Hybrid with a T2 Pen Tool and GMC software.

"After using a CMC for so long, I've become accustomed to exploring and incorporating creative matting into frame designs where possible," she says. "My customers love coming in to see my latest creations, which I display in our shop window or in-store display. These help sell more creative concepts for customers' projects."

One of Anita's recent creations was a frame designed for a Doctor Who photo that was autographed by the actors on the show. "I've been collecting signed photos from my favorite shows for years and framing them for myself afterwards," she says. "But when I heard the actors from Doctor Who were coming to Melbourne for a convention, I wanted to create something unique that I could share with them on that day."

Knowing what photographs would be available for signing, Anita spent a couple of days considering possible designs that would enhance an autographed photo while also reflecting the theme of the series.

"I found an image of the iconic Tardis and loaded it into the Gunnar GMC software using the 'Draw Mode' feature," she says. "Then, I traced it in Draw Mode and came up with a design mixture of both openings and V-grooves. I finished with an outline shape that I could use as an offset feature in the finished concept."

She then floated the Tardis image about 1/8" on top of a suede top mat to give a 3D effect with shadow behind it to show that it was floating. "The main round-shaped opening for the photo in the suede mat was created using a standard template in GMC," Anita says. "At first, I designed it straight on, but I really wanted to create the feeling that it was moving, so I used the transform tools to rotate it."

After a test cut, however, she still wasn't completely happy. "As an afterthought, I used Draw Mode to add some



Anita McNab created a special Doctor Who presentation using a CMC to cut a special mat design for an autographed cast photo along with a secondary mat cut to resemble the Tardis, Doctor Who's time machine.

extra curved V-grooves coming off the outside edges of the rounded opening. This gave me the extra element of motion I was looking for. It also helped fill in some of the empty space"

Overall, Anita spent less than two hours to create the complete design-and-cut process. "Much of the time was having fun deciding between different ideas before I chose the final concept. It was great to be able to take my completed matboard design with me to the convention, collecting and placing the photo in it, all ready for the actors to sign. When I met them and explained that I do this for a living, one of them said, 'That's the coolest framing I've ever seen.' Another asked, 'Where can I get one of these?' And a third commented, 'It must be the greatest thing to have a job that lets you create something as unique and special as this.' I couldn't agree more.

"I love the fact that I can be creative with my Gunnar CMC and that the software gives me the flexibility to do this so quickly, especially when time can be so valuable. It is the most valuable, fun tool I have to play with in my workshop. It has helped me grow my business and my reputation, giving me a strong point of difference between myself and other framers. I'd never be without it." **PFM**