

Creating Polished Artwork on a Budget

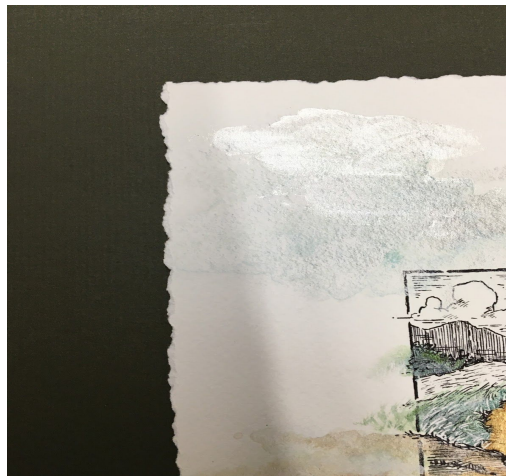
With Momentum 2021 Committee Members
Melody Allen, Aunj Braggs, and Devon Herron

Before we begin, OVAC puts on a workshop every February called Exhibition Ready. This year, it will be held on **February 20, 2021 from 1-4pm via Zoom**. Registration is free for Momentum artists, \$10 for OVAC members, or \$15 for non-members. This workshop will be led in part by Devon Herron, one of the contributors for this document. [Click here to register.](#)

Frames are consistently thought of in regards to art hanging in a gallery and it is because their presence states the completion and finality of a piece. Frames can add a level of professionalism to artwork, and that is why most of the tips we will be discussing here are how to frame on a budget.

Traditionally if one starts off by making a piece and then investing in a frame, it can cost them a pretty penny, especially for larger sizes. This can be the most expensive route when it comes to finishing artwork, but luckily below are a list of tips and alternatives to creating polished, gallery ready artwork on a budget.

1. The easiest technique would be buying your frame first and building your artwork within it. You can find frames at art supply stores, garage sales and thrift stores.
2. Make your work on standard sizes like 11'x14' or 18'x24' so when your work is finished you can shop the sales at your favorite art supply store and find the best frame for your finished work.
3. If your work is on paper and not on a standard size, try mounting it on a standard size mat board or even textured paper and then framing it.



Devon Herron

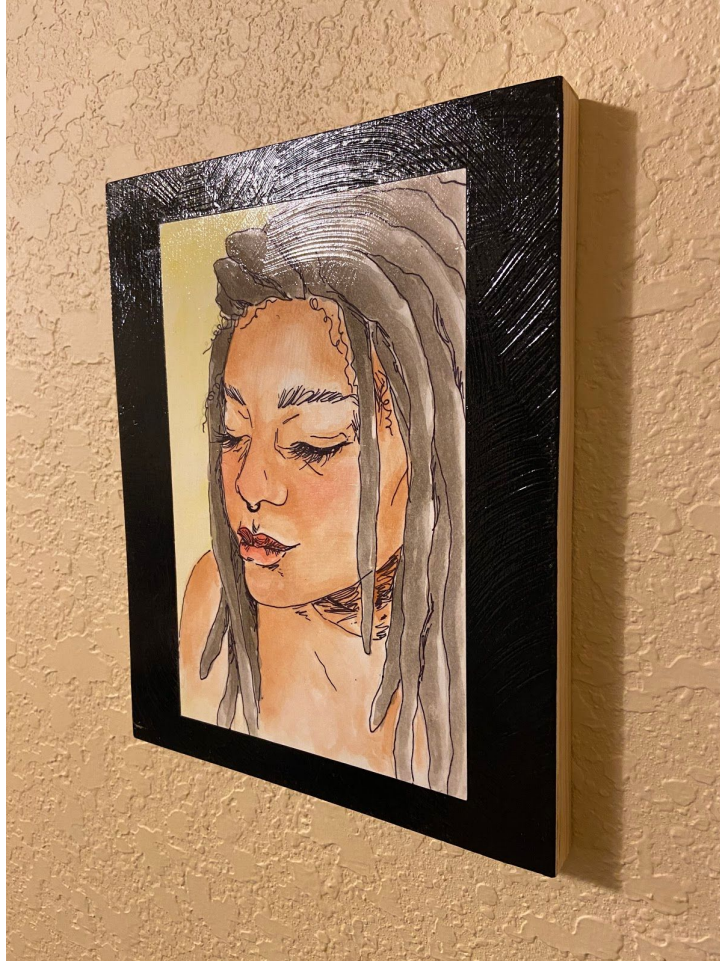
An easy shortcut to professionalism could be Deckling (carefully ripping) your edges and using double sided tape to adhere to standard size matboard or textured paper, and then putting your piece into a standard size frame. Devon's example above shows a Deckled edge.

This paper on matboard technique is a great way to draw the viewer's eye into the artwork especially for smaller works. Some examples of Devon Herron's work below shows this.



Art by Devon Herron

4. If your work is not on paper but is still 2D and needs a custom frame, [Zieglers](#) in Tulsa is a great place for affordable custom frames and if at all possible try building your own. These are more expensive options but if you know someone with framing tools or know of a public resource that provides them, building a custom frame will be time consuming but cheaper for larger works of art.
5. If you have small works and don't want to bother with frames, a cheap alternative can be using standard size paper and mounting it on standard size wooden canvas. A technique Aunj uses starts by painting the board the desired frame color and adhering the paper to the center of the board using modge podge or a clear adhesive. Finish the pseudo frame by covering the surface with the same adhesive. For a Matte finish use a matte medium. An example of a glossy finish is shown below.



Artwork by Aunj Braggs

6. Another quick fix would be to use canvas with thicker sides and be sure to finish the sides as well with paint. This will give your work a finished look without a frame. This technique works well for artwork of all sizes but can be a great solution for larger works that are difficult to frame.
7. One expense seems to be buying the material in which to make the work. Buying canvas can be expensive. If you want a framed piece, try buying your frame and going to Home Depot to buy your surfaces. Masonite or Medium Density Fiberboard can be purchased in bulk and cut down to custom sizes. This alternative to canvas can cut the price of your surface material in half. If you have access to the necessary hardware, building your frames and backing can be made cheaply by having your wood pieces cut for free at home depot.
8. If you don't want to bother with wood cutting, try buying canvas board, which is always a standard size, to put into a frame. This is very affordable for medium to small sized artwork.

9. If you are a painter, finish your work by putting a glaze or varnish on top. The type of varnish depends on the medium you use so be sure to research best techniques.
10. Finally, be sure to shop the sales. Hobby Lobby always has a 40% off coupon and Michaels has a great rewards program that constantly runs sales on frames. Zieglers is a local family owned business with a wider variety of brands and great custom framing services. Whatever you decide, just know if it looks finished and presentable it does not matter how you got there.