

**Matte Color Selection Workshop**  
**Sun City Photography Club**  
**February 7, 2006 - 7:00 to 9:00 pm - VA Studio**

You take a picture, make an image, either you or someone else processes the image and you end up with either a print, a slide show, a digital image on a website or in an email, or other "final outputs." Let's consider just what one should do after making a print. What you do depends on where the print will go: into a scrap book, a paper photo folder, a frame on the mantle, or a frame on the wall, etc.

How should one proceed and what materials should one use?

We've all seen pictures in frames with no mattes. That's one way, but not very artistic or impressive. These are often just commercial portraits in a frame of the same size. We'll skip this and save these frames for the photo of Uncle Charlie.

Another way, one which we typically see in photo galleries is to put all the images in similar frames with similar (color) mattes. For example, black and white images in a gallery are usually shown with a white or off-white matte in a black or dark color plain frame. This is so that when they are viewed, one's attention is directed to the image. (That is, "the package" is neutral.)

Another way is to prepare the final product so that it can be used as a decoration in an office or home. This is the aspect of matting and framing that we will discuss in this Workshop. First, let's recognize that there is "no single right answer" to the question about how one should proceed. Neither are there "multiple right answers." What you do needs to be pleasing to the people who will "live with the image." If the image is to be part of the decoration, part of the furnishings, then it ought to be of a style and color that is compatible with the other furnishings and the lifestyle of the inhabitants. That should be obvious, but often the implementation ignores the end use of the art work. This then means one can use a basic frame or a fancy frame, and the color can match or complement the other furnishings. It also assumes the image itself is compatible with the rest of the surroundings in which it will be shown and viewed. But, there are "guidelines" and "good advice."

Therefore, think about the total package: the image itself, the surrounding matte, and the color and style of the frame, and the room. Make the selection process a comprehensive selection process so that your end product will be totally pleasing in the environment in which it will be viewed. Be creative. There are no rules, but **there are some design and decorative guidelines, primarily of an artistic nature. That's why the Workshop.**

Let's first concentrate on the matte colors, then the frame.

The Workshop we will have will be a cooperative effort between you and several VAC artists. We will set up some work tables where you (the Photography Club member) may bring several images and where the artists will have sample mattes. You and they will work together to select a suitable matte color. We will look at as many images as possible, going through a round-robin process so that everyone gets an opportunity to have one processed before going on to a second image. In order to enhance the learning process, we can move around the Studio and listen and watch the artists and the members discuss the alternatives and make selections. How many images we will be able to work on depends on how many members come and how long each decision takes, both of which are unknowns. Therefore, **bring several images** and you'll get your share evaluated with no promise as to how many. We'll finish at 9:00 pm, but you may have made a new artist friend you can call on in the future.

The end product of this part of the Workshop will be for each member to leave with a matte color selection that can be finalized by the member using the Studio Matte Cutter or commercially.

If you need instruction cutting mattes, single or double, small classes can be arranged, usually with VAC member Bob Peek who will show you how to properly use the matte cutter. A limited variety of mattes and picture backings (foam core) are available to purchase in the Studio. Each item is priced, and all you need to do is put the proper amount of money in the cash box, preferably with a note attached indicating what you purchased. If you don't see the color matte you want in stock, there are many commercial locations where you can buy 32" x 40" (full size) mattes.

Framing is another subject. We'll cover some "framing basics" in this Workshop. Remember that the frame itself is an integral component of the final art package and what matte and matte color you select needs to be compatible with the frame.

A word on matte sizing. That is, the amount of matte on each side of the image, i.e. the borders. There are no rules, and each person has her/his preferences. The easiest is to make the borders all the same size. For example, two inches all around. Some, however, think the edge borders ought to be the same size with the top border a bit smaller and the bottom border a bit larger. (There are some mathematical considerations to the top and bottom borders which can make some size selections better than some others.) Some say that the two edge borders and either the top or the bottom border ought to (all three) be the same size with the fourth either a bit larger if it's the bottom border, or a bit smaller if it's the top border. Confusing? Just re-read it and if necessary, draw yourself a picture or two. Look around the VAC Studio and see what the different matte size borders look like and select the style that appeals to you. But, before you get involved in matte cutting, you should decide on the frame size AND the border sizes. This makes it a complex process, and may even affect the size of the image you're going to print in your Photoshop. Remember, all of this is integrated in the decision making procedure, and the sizing of the image itself should not be made without also considering the rest of the package. (Before you select the final sizes in your Photoshop Print Routine, draw yourself a picture of the final product and put the various sizes on the dimensions and see if it's pleasing.)