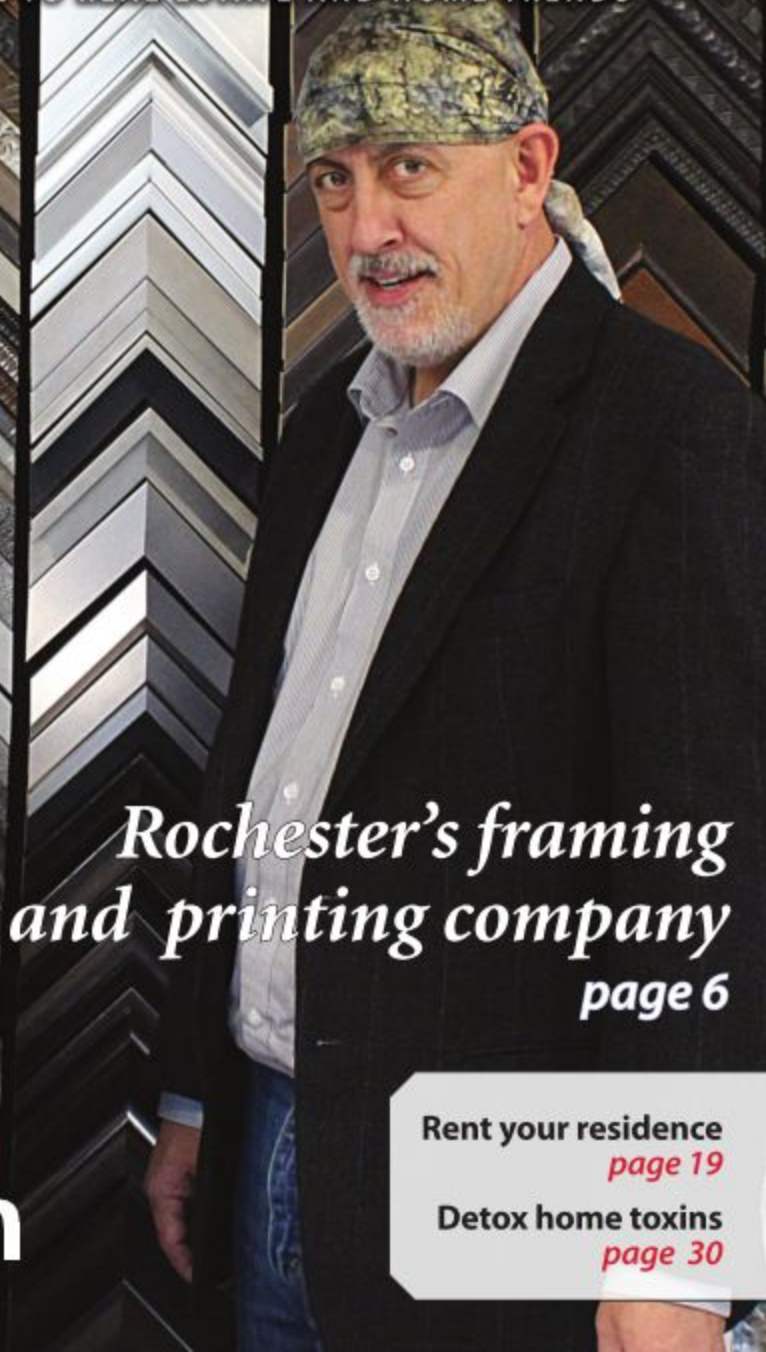


at home

SOUTHEAST MINNESOTA'S GUIDE TO REAL ESTATE AND HOME TRENDS



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A small selection of framing options available at Rochester Framing and Fine Art Printing. All photos by Allison Roe.

Capturing the moment

New shop uses archival standards for framing and printing your art and memorabilia

by Allison Roe

A piece of art is at the mercy of its framer. If done poorly, the art will be overshadowed by an overly ornate frame and poorly-matched mat. If done well, however, the frame will enhance the art piece and will even sustain its quality. Framing is also useful for capturing important mementos from your life. A well-designed frame can completely change the look of what's being showcased, whether it's a piece of art or a baptismal gown. Knowing how to frame correctly is an art in and of itself, an art which John and Valerie Becker are bringing to Rochester.

John and Valerie opened the Red Wing Framing and Fine Art Printing store in Red Wing in 2002. The pair offers both printing and framing services. Over the years, they've seen their customer base grow and noticed quite a few

customers coming from Rochester.

Last year, the two put together a business plan which involved opening a store in Rochester, something they had been wanting to do since 2008. In the fall of 2014, they were able to open their doors at their shop on Broadway: Rochester Framing and Fine Art Printing. Though the printing and framing is done at their studio in Red Wing, the Rochester shop offers the same complete printing and framing design services. John is in charge of the printing aspect of the business, while Valerie takes care of framing.

Digital reproduction

There is an incredible variety of options available to customers who come to John for their printing desires. "Digital is really all about reproduction," says John. For example, a family member might bring in a memento such as their



Valerie and John Becker.



Showing a few printing and framing options.

parents marriage certificate or the deed to the family farm – it's a piece of family history that many family members might want but there is only one original. "They'll bring it to us, we'll scan it, we'll color correct it so it looks very much like the original and we'll reproduce it based on their needs," says John.

They've also seen an interest from artists looking to reproduce their work. One local Rochester artist brings her multi-media pieces to the Beckers to create reproductions to sell. "She only has one original, so she comes to us to scan them and then duplicate them on a fine art media," John says. "That way she can sell reproductions of her original, because there's only ever going to be one original."

One thing John appreciates is the way he and Valerie can offer a complete package from printing to framing, though it's also nice for customers to have the option of just printing or just framing. "By doing printing and framing, we're able to provide a more complete service," he says, very clearly passionate about being able to offer the customer exactly what they want.

Stand-out framing

Valerie is the driving force behind the framing operations. A member of the Professional Picture Framer's Association, she just recently was recognized as a Master Certified Picture Framer (MCPF), an extremely prestigious title. According to the press release announcing her certification, the MCPF is "the highest and most prestigious professional credential in the international framing community. It demonstrates an expert skill in framing, especially as it applies to archival and museum-level custom framing."

One of only 60 MCPFs in the world, Valerie is the first Minnesotan to receive this title. John says that Valerie's taking the test showcases just how much the two are invested in the business of framing. Valerie recalls the exam process, explaining how she had to prepare four different pieces to showcase her skills to the examiners. "You design them and frame them up using the best materials, because you really want to be able to showcase those pieces," she says. She applied for and received a scholarship to help offset both the cost of the test and also the cost of her materials.

During the actual test, the test takers are given an hour and a half to complete a piece. Each applicant chooses the piece, creates the design, cuts the frame, glass and mat and puts everything together. "An hour and a half at the time seemed like plenty of time," says Valerie, "but I handed in my piece with only one minute to spare!"

John is extremely proud of Valerie's accomplishment. "It demonstrates to the customer that you care enough about your business," he says. The two echo that sentiment, the idea that they care, in every customer interaction.

All of Valerie's dedication shows in the intricate work that she does. She takes time with each customer to listen to their desires and to come up with a design plan they are happy with. She offers an incredible selection of framing materials, all of which are of archival quality. "A lot of what we do is actually reframing pieces," she says, explaining how far the industry has come in creating archival-quality standards.

Start to finish

As an example of how she creates a finished piece, Valerie uses a competition piece she framed for the Professional Picture Framer's Association. Every participant is given the same piece of art; in this case, it was a quilted piece done by a Hmong artist. "I did a little research," says Valerie, "but basically what I do is I try to frame to the art." This means she takes into consideration where the customer would like to hang the piece, but if



A contemporary acrylic look.



Valerie's finished competition piece.

it's not working, she will go back to the customer and say their idea works well for the space but not for the art piece. "Sometimes that's enough to steer the customer to hang it somewhere else, but usually we can make it work to the space they want."

After getting a feel for the piece to be framed, Valerie then decides how to mat and frame it. For the quilt piece, her desire was to keep the framing neutral to keep the focus on the art. She hand-laced the quilt around a rag mat, mounted it on fabric, added a fillet and a silk mat on top, finishing with a neutral frame. She takes this same care with each piece she frames.

Framing isn't the only route available for your art. Valerie and John also do shadow boxes for holding three-dimensional memorabilia, along with a contemporary acrylic-style printing and a canvas print finished with a gallery wrap.

As they get their Rochester store up and running, the two are keeping flexible hours as they work out how to juggle their two stores. They are always open to making appointments at either location outside of their business hours. "It's very much a relationship, we spend a lot of time with the customers... if you take care of the customer, the customer will take care of you. And that's very true, we really believe that," says John.

On average, pieces are completed within two weeks, though both Valerie and John are quick to note that they will work with any time frame. Even their delivery options cater to their customers: they can pick up the piece in Red Wing, Rochester or have it delivered to their home.

Whether it's reprinting a painting done by a deceased relative or preserving a 100-year-old baptismal gown in a shadow box, the two showcase a high level of professionalism. As dedicated business owners and lovers of art, John and Valerie bring a passion to their work. And it shows in every print and every frame. ●

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