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A dealer is offering to mount high-tech plasma TVs in 19th- and 20th-century frames

For the collector who has everything

Jason Edward Kaufman

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After paying thousands of dollars for a state-of-the-art plasma television, why let its high-tech design spoil the décor of your apartment? That is the question being asked by Eli Wilner, who sells fine 19th- and 20th-century frames, and is now offering to frame his clients' televisions.

“Their paintings are framed beautifully, their furniture has been chosen by an interior decorator, their window treatments are complete, everyone’s dressed to the nines, and the TV looks like a high-tech blunder”, he says, explaining that several clients asked him to resolve the impending design crisis.

“I had my first great idea in 1983—finding frames that dealers were throwing away and selling

them to museums and collectors”, he says. Framing TVs is “idea number two”.

The Eli Wilner & Company website is offering “a selection of 3,000 styles to fit any interior”, with prices ranging from \$10,000 to \$20,000 and up. Clients send an image of the room in question to Mr Wilner and the gallery then suggests frame choices and provides digital images of how the proposed frame will improve the interior.

In one example, a widescreen image of a golf tournament looks splendid in a Stanford White-style gilded frame suitable for a Whistler nocturne. Another shows a sailing scene in a custom-made wooden frame mounted above an Arts & Crafts fireplace.

So what happens when the TV is turned off? Who wants an empty frame hanging on the wall? That problem is solved by the television itself, which Mr Wilner is now offering along with the frame. “I’m going to become a TV retailer!” he says excitedly. The model he is working with is a Phillips 23-inch plasma set (retail price \$2,999.00) with a special laminated film on the LCD screen that gives it a mirror reflection when the TV is off—just the thing for that space over the mantle.

There is a framed “mirror-vision” set on display in the gallery to convert disbelievers. So far, however the business is in its infancy and Mr Wilner has framed only three televisions, all for American collectors for whom he had already framed works of art, but he is certain that “it’s too good a concept not to count on tremendous volume”.

He is already in discussion with the Regent and Marriot hotel chains, and who knows where it all may lead? After all, Mr Wilner has framed 28 paintings for the White House and President Bush is known to watch the tube from time to time. In Mr Wilner’s expert opinion, “The White house needs a framed TV”.

www.eliwilner.com

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