

AT THE Ready

Variety of Pre-Fab Frames More Dizzying Than Ever

By **GABRIEL KILEY**

Ready-made frames come in countless sizes and styles. They are made from wood, pressed wood, plastic and metal. They are available empty or complete with glass and backing. Most are rectangle-shaped, but some are oval, octagon, round or fan-shaped.

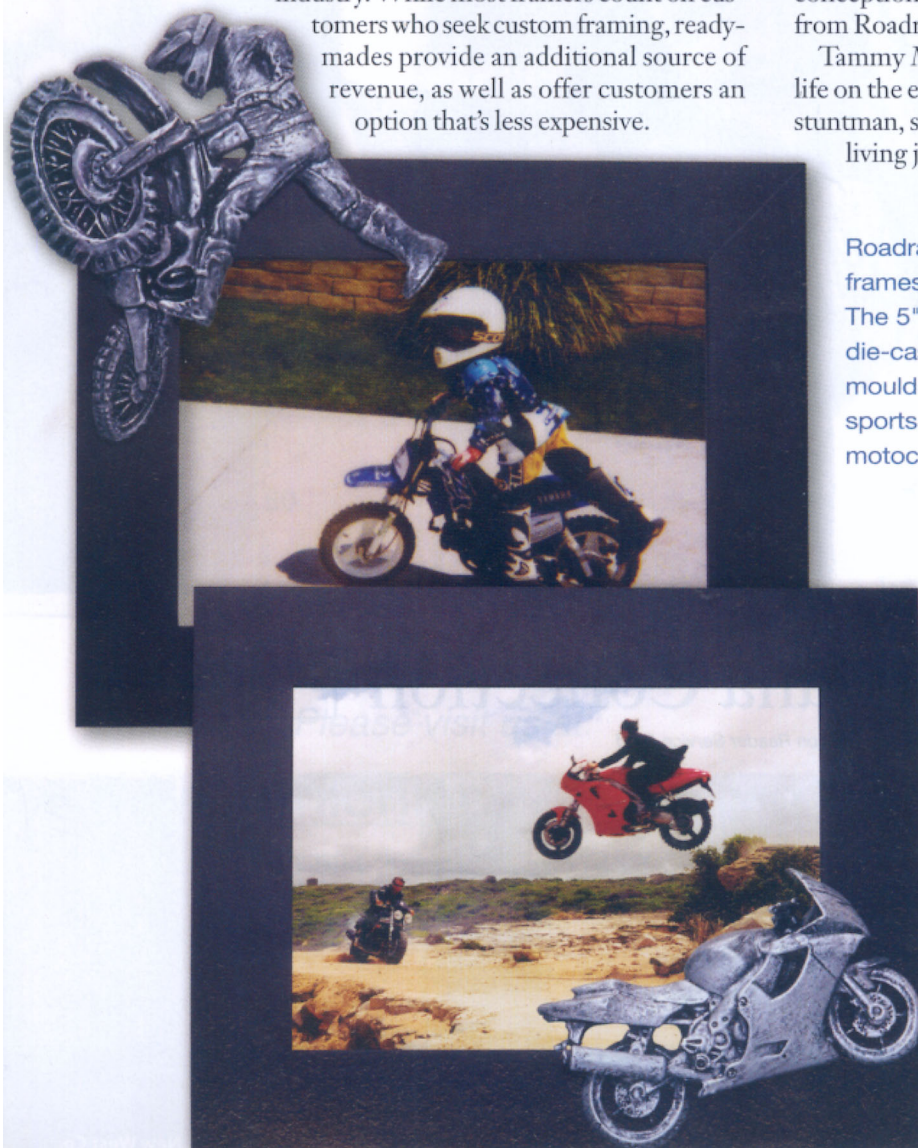
Readymades fill an important niche in the art and framing industry. While most framers count on customers who seek custom framing, readymades provide an additional source of revenue, as well as offer customers an option that's less expensive.

While readymades are simply a small portion of the inventory at some moulding manufacturers and distributors, some companies concentrate exclusively on creating affordable, yet fashionable, frames in all sorts of shapes, colors and sizes. Many of the selections are pretty much what you might expect.

But then you'll come across some that challenge that preconception. Take the trend-setting "extreme" readymades from Roadrash Frames.

Tammy Morts, who developed the line, is used to living life on the edge. Daughter of a stuntwoman and married to a stuntman, she's a stunt veteran herself. She used to make her living jumping off buildings, getting in high-impact car

Roadrash Frames, Santa Clarita, CA, offers 10 frames tailored for "extreme sports" enthusiasts. The 5" x 7" frames come with a 3-dimensional die-cast extreme sports figures attached to the moulding. The figures include a range of extreme sports from snowboarding and skateboarding to motocross and BMX.



crashes and escaping from burning buildings. Her film and TV credits include "Terminator 2," "Edward Scissorhands," "Scream 3" and "Baywatch."

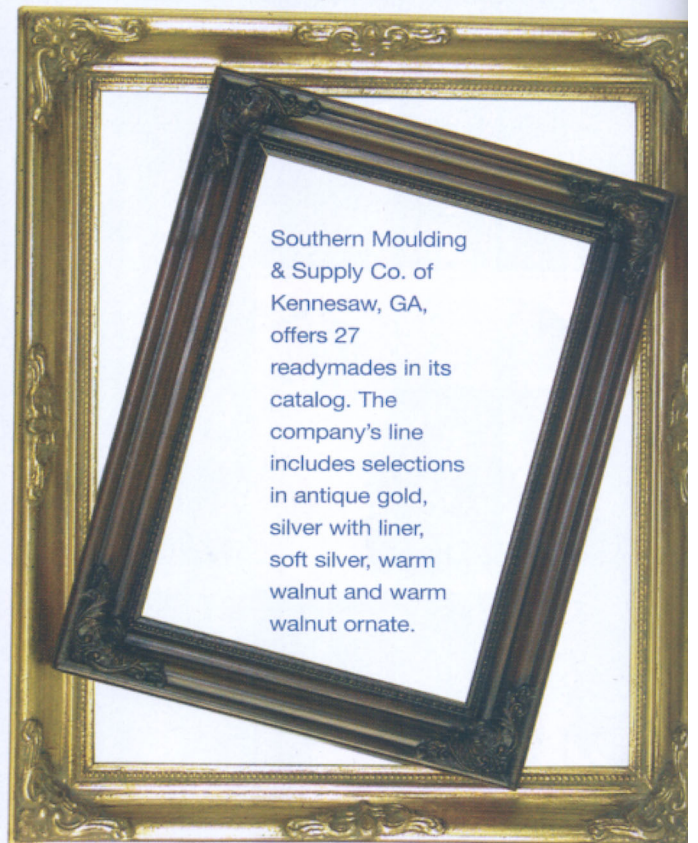
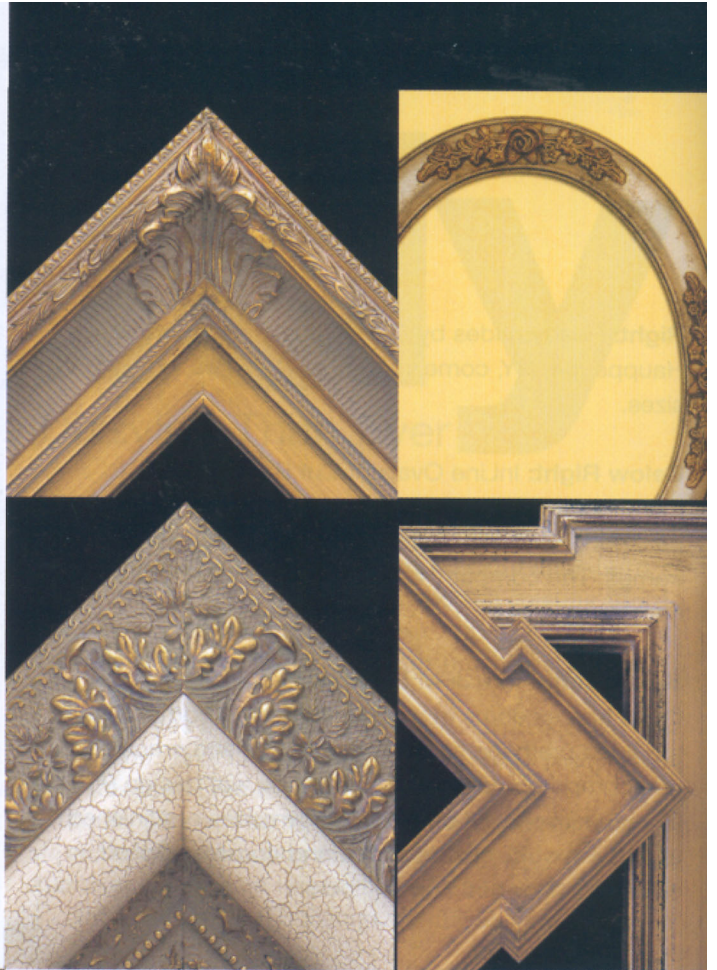
But the business world posed a completely different set of risks, and Morts admits to being intimidated upon venturing into this vast, unknown territory.

It all began when she came home one night to her husband, Billy, and 5-year-old son, Tristen, bloodied and bruised from a day on the set of "Roswell," the TV show. Her day's work had involved running across the street and getting hit by a car.

Tristen told his Mommy that he loved her and didn't want to see her hurt again. During their chat, her little boy mentioned that he wanted a "vroom-vroom" frame for a picture of him, true to the family enterprise, on his motorcycle. Banged up as she was that day, her son's remark

Right: Tara Picture Frames of El Cajon, CA, presents hand-crafted, solid wood readymades in standard sizes and various colors and styles.

Below: Multi-Angle Studios, Brooksville, FL, offers customers the opportunity to select their own size, shape and moulding. The company will cut and join the frame and send it to them with a cardboard template so they can use it to trace their mats and glass.





Left: Nielsen Bainbridge, Paramus, NJ, offers a variety of readymades that are representative of the diversity available on the market today.

Below: These new readymades by Ten Plus Inc., Santa Fe Springs, CA, are available in eight sizes either in gold with a wood trim finish, or silver with wood trim.

Bottom: The Embossed Classics Readymade Collection by West Shore Inc., Westlake, OH. Made of embossed hardwoods, the beaded-embossed and leaf-embossed profiles are available in two sizes, for a selection of four profiles. Each profile comes in three finishes – mahogany, honey and walnut.

sparked her idea for “extreme” frames.

“I told my husband that I didn’t want to do stunt work anymore, but that’s all I know,” recalls Morts. “I told him what my son said, and he told me, ‘Go for it!’”

“I come from a family that goes for the adrenaline,” Morts said. “There is extreme deodorant, extreme toothpaste and extreme cereal, but there’s nothing for extreme enthusiasts like what I offer.”

So, three years ago, Morts established Roadrash in Santa Clarita, CA, a Los Angeles suburb. (You might not find the term “road rash” in your dictionary. It wasn’t in any of the editions at DECOR. But we have at least one motorcycle buff on staff, who emphasizes that the “condition” may be prevented by wearing a helmet and the right protective clothing, i.e., leather. Road rash is the painful result of an accident on pavement or any other hard surface. The rash appears on any exposed flesh that scrapes along that hard surface, at certain speeds, for uncomfortable distances.)

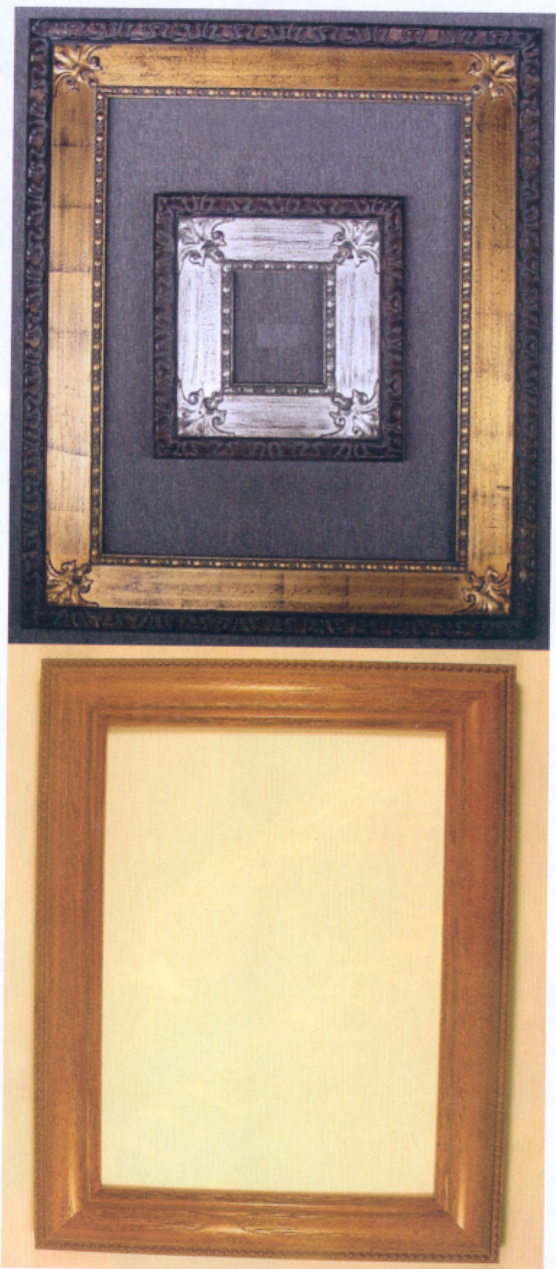
And the Roadrash concept is beginning to catch on—although admittedly nervous at DECOR Expo Atlanta 2003, her first tradeshow, she was gratified by industry reaction to her line. Visitors to her booth mentioned being into motorcycles themselves or talked about their skateboarding kids. It didn’t hurt to have her mother, a petite woman who was the stunt double for Sally Field in “Smokey and the Bandit,” by her side.

Morts is confident she’ll be able to pull off her latest stunt. In the business world, her heart still races and the adrenaline pumps. “The funny thing is I now have more self-confidence than I ever had before,” Morts said. “To go into a store or a sales meeting and try to sell my product is a complete rush.”

The frames sell for between \$24 and \$26 each. More styles are slated to be released later this year. Visit www.roadrashframes.com.

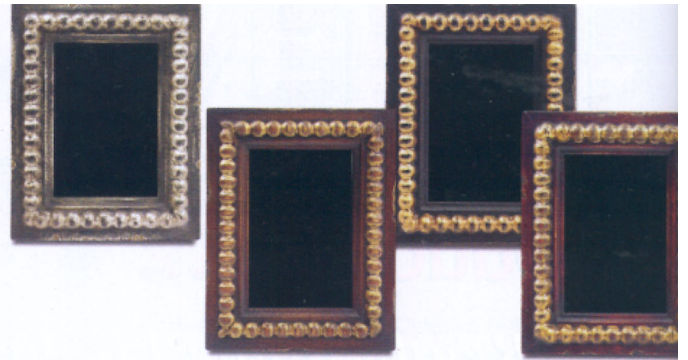
Most manufacturers of readymades don’t go to such extremes. Still, overall, quality and innovation in this category continue to improve every year.

“Ready-made frames, to me, are not just moulding joined together in a standard size. They need to be unique,” said Pat McDaniel of JFM Enterprises, Norcross, GA, an Atlanta suburb. “A corner ornament, for example, should



Right: The Gianni series of photo frames by Roma Moulding Inc. is hand-finished and -distressed to achieve a vintage appearance. Available in three classic styles and four Florentine colors.

Below: MTS Frames of Clifton, NJ, recently introduced Multi-Mat Frame. This product comes with three mats with openings for 4" x 6", 5" x 7" and 8" x 10", which allows for six mat designs for each frame.



not be an afterthought on a ready-made frame. It should be part of the frame."

In addition, it gives customers the option to spend money in other areas.

"The trend today is the primary buyers of ready-made frames are people into oil paintings, original artists painting

in standard sizes, and photographers," McDaniel said.

Kathy Jorgensen of Tara Picture Frames, outside San Diego, said the company offers about 200 readymades in sizes ranging from 5" x 7" to 30" x 40" in rectangles and ovals in a variety of colors. Tara offers 11 different categories from its Classic Collection to its Gallery and Premium collections.

"We have the simple to the ornate," Jorgensen said. "We pride ourselves in the quality of our work. The customer has a lot of options."

The improvements in the quality of ready-made frames makes for a customer-friendly market, McDaniel said.

"The readymades today are more Italian in appearance, which is a good thing," McDaniel said. "They used to look cheaply put together. That's not the case anymore. The prices are competitive and the quality is there." □



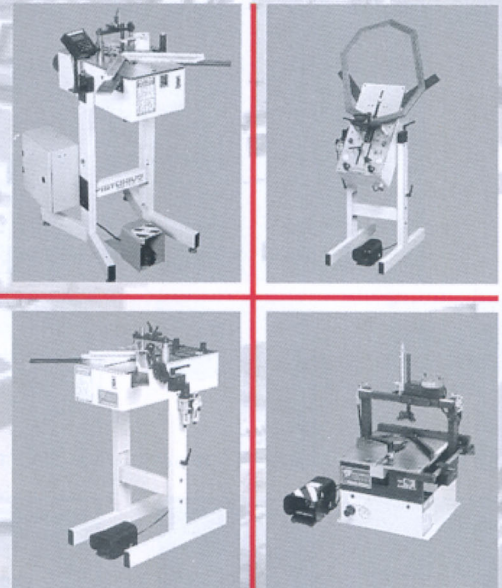
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