

LOWY

MAKING ART HISTORY FOR 100 YEARS

A Newsletter Published By Julius Lowy Frame & Restoring Company, Inc. 223 East 80th Street, New York, NY 10021, 212 - 861 - 8585

Centennial Celebration 2007



To set foot in Lowy's elegant atelier on the Upper East Side of New York is to travel back in time through a colorful 100-year history that has established Lowy as America's preeminent framing and art restoration company. Skilled carvers, gilders and restorers work here today with the same passion and dedication as their forbears, a familiar sight immortalized in a vibrant 1989 painting by the late Lithuanian-born, School of Paris artist Arbit Blatas, who was a frequent customer and friend. Lowy's history of uncompromising standards still lingers in stacks of glittering gold frames, the purposeful tap of a chisel and the scent of resin varnish. Artisans inpainting a towering Revolutionary War portrait of George Washington or designing a massive frame for an Albert Bierstadt masterpiece recall similar scenes from Lowy's past, whether it was master carver Mario Tormo working his magic on a serpentine frame or Lowy's former president Hilly Shar and conservator Al Angelico restoring Maxfield Parish's famous *Old King Cole* mural, which hung and still hangs in New York's St. Regis Hotel.

This year, Lowy celebrates its 100th anniversary with a not-to-be missed traveling exhibition, *The Secret Lives of Frames: One Hundred Years of Art and Artistry from the Lowy Collection*, featuring 100 historic antique frames in a range of styles and periods. On view at Lowy's galleries from January 12 to April 13, the exhibition will then travel to the Butler Institute of American Art in Youngstown, Ohio, and the Chrysler Museum of Art in Norfolk, Virginia. A fascinating fully illustrated book accompanies the exhibition. Both the exhibition and the book offer new insights into the centuries-old frame making tradition and how it continues to meet the needs of today's connoisseurs, as well as practical information on the basics of framing.

"As the second of three generations of Shars at Lowy I have had the distinct pleasure and advantage of learning from both what was and what is yet to come," says Larry Shar, president of Lowy. "It is an envious position to have learned old-world techniques and philosophies from my father and to be utilizing and learning new technological and progressive techniques from my son, Brad. The amalgamation of the old world and new is what keeps us at the top of our game and the leader of our industry as we celebrate our centennial year. I look forward to many more years of dedication, growth and service to the fine art community that is so much a part of our life."

The centennial exhibition offers an inside look at an impeccable assemblage of antique frames ranging from a rare early 16th century Tuscan cassetta frame and an early 18th-century Spanish Baroque frame to an exquisitely carved Louis XV-style example from the mid 18th century and early 20th-century frames designed by the American architect Stanford White and the French Art Nouveau designer Hector Guimard (who also designed the Paris Metro system). Several of the frames will be exhibited with period works of art as well.

The lavishly illustrated book *THE SECRET LIVES OF FRAMES: One Hundred Years of Art and Artistry* (Filipacchi Publishing, \$50.00) by Deborah Davis takes readers on a guided tour of Lowy's 100 greatest frames, shedding new understanding on this sometime "Cinderella" of the art world. Not only an essential primer on the various periods and styles of the framer's art, this comprehensive survey also includes sections on the frame making process, art conservation and restoration, and how to identify antique and reproduction frames, all interwoven with Lowy's lively history.

Larry's mother, Rose, who celebrated her 90th birthday last year, is one of the firm's greatest treasures. She fondly recalls Lowy's early days: "The art world was a small fraternity with interesting *(continued on page 2)*

Above: Lowy frame label ca 1930.

Below left to right: Al Angelico and Hilly Shar restoring Maxfield Parish's *Old King Cole* mural in 1957; Lowy atelier as painted by Arbit Blatas ca.1989; Lowy master carver Mario Tormo carving serpentine frame ca. 1990.





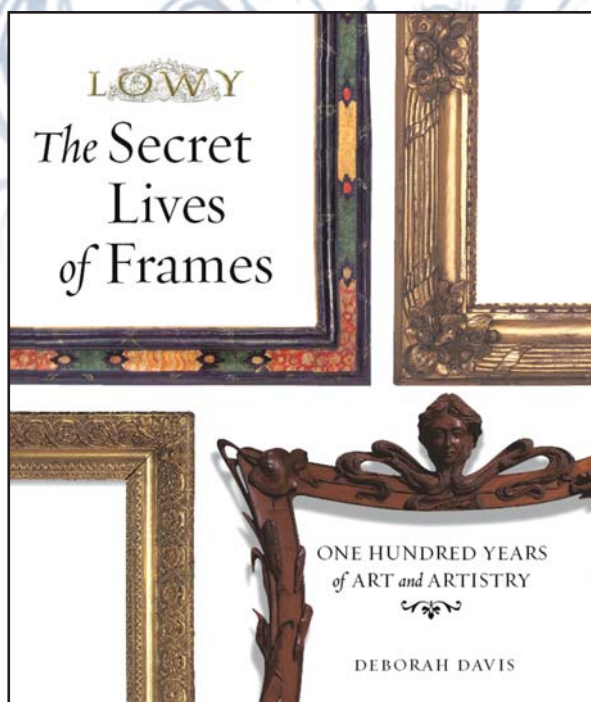
(Centennial Celebration 2007 continued)

people, most of them rich, some eccentric, and always exciting. Lowy was one of the only framers and restorers around at the time and always in the thick of it. I have wonderful memories of meeting famous people at Shar-Sisto and later at Lowy and visiting their fabulous homes. Having drinks at the St. Regis Hotel with Salvador Dali was a highlight. Dali called my husband, Hilly, “The Maestro” for framing his works so brilliantly. Sam Salz, the famous Impressionist art dealer, was another of Hilly’s biggest fans. Kennedy Galleries, under Rudy Wunderlich, Hirschl & Adler, and Wildenstein were also big supporters of Lowy. They introduced us to many private clients like Ogden Phipps, Mr. and Mrs. Winston Guest and even Rose Kennedy.”

The largest and oldest fine arts services firm in America, Lowy continues to serve an illustrious clientele ranging from private collectors and art dealers to museums, institutions and corporations. Stuart P. Feld, president and director of Hirschl & Adler Galleries in New York, remains a loyal fan. “There has never been a moment in my professional life that I have not relied heavily on the firm of Lowy—first Hilly Shar, and now Larry and Brad,” says Feld. “Countless Hirschl & Adler masterpieces that now grace major museums and private collections across America have been cleaned and restored to best museum standards by Lowy, and Lowy frames enhance our Copleys and Bingham and Coles and Homers from Boston to Los Angeles and back.” ■



Larry and Brad Shar and Lisa Wyer as they look forward to entering Lowy’s Centennial year.



The Beauty and History of Frames Revealed

“Being at Lowy was like being in a frame museum, where the frames came to life with their own personalities, their own look and, in some cases, even their own attitudes,” says Davis. “I was especially inspired by Lowy’s rich family history. It’s such an incredible American success story — how the self-taught connoisseur Hilly Shar, an amazing Horatio Alger-like character, passed along the Lowy tradition to his son and grandson. I hope this book will help people appreciate the wonderful world of frames and not be intimidated by it. There’s no replacing an expert, but it’s great to be able to meet the subject halfway.”

‘Larry has taken to this business as a duck takes to water.’ And now with my grandson, Brad, in the business, this gives me a lot to be thankful for.”

Stories of exciting framing discoveries, as well as Lowy’s notable assignments over the years, are also featured in the book. As the premiere resource for quality fine art services, Lowy has been called upon by leading museums and institutions to assist in the framing of important art works. Stellar projects have included reframing Paul Cezanne’s “The Bather” and Vincent van Gogh’s “Portrait of Joseph Roulin” for the Museum of Modern Art; reframing paintings and restoring period frames in the renowned Thannhauser Collection at the Guggenheim Museum; and reframing three large paintings by Giovanni Battista Tiepolo that are displayed atop the grand staircase in The Metropolitan Museum of Art. More recently, Lowy was commissioned to create a monumental frame for Albert Bierstadt’s ten-foot by five-foot work, *The Great Trees*, Mariposa Grove, California.

Filled with archival photographs, exquisite reproductions of the frames themselves, and new photography of framed works of art displayed in the homes and offices of prominent collectors, this book is certain to become the must-have resource on the art of framing ■

Frames are often overlooked, yet, in many cases, they are as important as the art they enclose. “At no time in the history of America has the awareness of the frame’s significance been so great, both as an art object and as a vehicle for aesthetically and historically enhancing a work of art,” says Larry Shar, president of Lowy. Larry is one of the stars in the book *THE SECRET LIVES OF FRAMES: One Hundred Years of Art and Artistry* (\$50.00) by Deborah Davis, just released by Filipacchi Publishing to mark Lowy’s centennial.

In this elegant, informative survey, the history of frame making is explored through 100 of the most important frames that have passed through Lowy’s doors. From the earliest Italian Renaissance frames to Dutch master frames of the 17th century, French frames throughout the King Louis reigns, and Pre-Raphaelite English and 19th- to 20th-century American frames, various periods and styles of the framer’s art come alive with fascinating detail and exceptional photography. Equally fascinating is the story of Lowy itself and its rise from humble art restoration shop to its present place as America’s premier fine arts services atelier. Author Deborah Davis, known for her best-selling books, *Strapless: John Singer Sargent and the Fall of Madame X* (Tarcher/Putnam, 2003) and *Party of the Century: The Fabulous Story of Truman Capote and His Black and White Ball* (Wiley, 2006), relates the rich history of Lowy, frames and frame makers in a lively and engaging manner.

Beyond the survey of the frame’s evolution, *THE SECRET LIVES OF FRAMES* educates the reader with useful information about all facets of frame making. Experts in Lowy’s master workshops share their secrets to carving, mold-making, gilding, finishing and proper fitting techniques, and show how to determine whether a frame is an antique, a reproduction or both. The book also provides valuable information on art conservation and restoration, and the new digital technology that can match a picture with a historically accurate frame.

THE SECRET LIVES OF FRAMES is peppered with entertaining anecdotes from Larry, who reminisces about his father, Hilly (the former president of Lowy), and the art world during a time when it was not merely a business but a way of life. “To have known my father was to have loved him,” Larry writes in the book’s foreword. “Hilly Shar was a man without pretense who loved what he did and taught in a way that today seems antiquated; from the heart and with words. At the age of 22, under his tutelage, I began my full-time career at Lowy. In those early years, I never imagined that three generations of Shars, including my son, Brad, would in any small way influence the fine art business with our experience and expertise.”

Commenting on the secret to Lowy’s ongoing success, Larry’s mother, Rose, adds, “My husband’s affability and personality, along with his talent and follow-through, endeared him to all who met him. He was a lot of fun to be with. Larry expanded what my husband worked so hard to begin. Hilly always said,



Deborah Davis, author of *THE SECRET LIVES OF FRAMES*. Photograph courtesy of Robin Holland

Centennial Exhibition: *The secret lives of frames*

As part of its centennial celebration in 2007, Lowy has organized a fascinating exhibition of antique frames, representing the most important examples of craftsmanship that have passed through the firm's doors throughout its 100-year history. *The Secret Lives of Frames: One Hundred Years of Art and Artistry from the Lowy Collection*, which features approximately 100 frames spanning a broad range of styles and periods, will open at Lowy's galleries on January 12 and remain on view through April 13. A portion of the exhibition will be on view from January 19 to January 28 at Lowy's booth at the 53rd Winter Antiques Show at New York's Seventh Regiment Armory. A segment focusing on American frames and related European frames will be displayed at the Butler Institute of American Art in Youngstown, Ohio, from June 10 to August 12. The entire show will then travel to the Chrysler Museum of Art in Norfolk, Virginia, from October 18 to January 6, 2008.

made in the late 17th century and represented in Lodi and Montanari's book, *Repertorio della Cornice Europea*. The Italian Auricular frame first appeared when Cardinal Leopoldo de Medici was reframing his painting collection housed on the second floor of the Pitti Palace in Florence. He used the frame style extensively on many of his works, including those of Rembrandt, Titian, Bronzino, Caravaggio and Veronese. The frame incorporates melting shell-like forms, stylized foliate motifs, volutes (spiral scrolling ornaments derived from Ionic order capitals) and amorphous grotesque masks in a sumptuous style that originated in Holland in the early 17th century. These frames glorified the collection and helped to unify the galleries, and can be found today in both the Pitti Palace and the Uffizi Gallery.



4.

Stanford White (1853-1906), who designed unique frames for many of his artist friends, including Thomas Wilmer Dewing and Augustus Saint-Gaudens. Incorporating motifs from his architectural work, which greatly influenced other frame makers, White's frames are considered among the most beautiful of the period, and were widely reproduced after his death in varying degrees of quality. Pictured here is a fine early 20th-century American gilt composition frame of ogee profile with continuous rows of leaf ornament and acanthus leaf corners executed by the Newcomb-Macklin Company. (The Newcomb-Macklin stamp is on the verso.)

Pictured below is another example of American craftsmanship from this period, an extraordinary carved and gilt frame in the Renaissance style with gadrooned outer edge and elaborately punched panels by the Boston firm of Carrig-Rohane. This frame could be called "the Lowy Centennial frame" because it is signed and dated on verso 1907.

An outstanding expression of the Art Nouveau style that was popular in France during the early 20th century can be found in a diminutive frame ornamented at top center with the visage of a woman. This delicate piece was created by French architect Hector Guimard (1867-1942), who is best known for *(continued on page 4)*



5.



3.

Also of note is an early 18th-century, Spanish Baroque carved, gilt and polychrome frame from Catalonia, which has a reverse profile with foliate sight edge and scrolling leaf carvings connecting elaborate foliate and grape clusters at the corners and centers. The grape clusters are probably religious symbols of the Holy Eucharist sacrament.

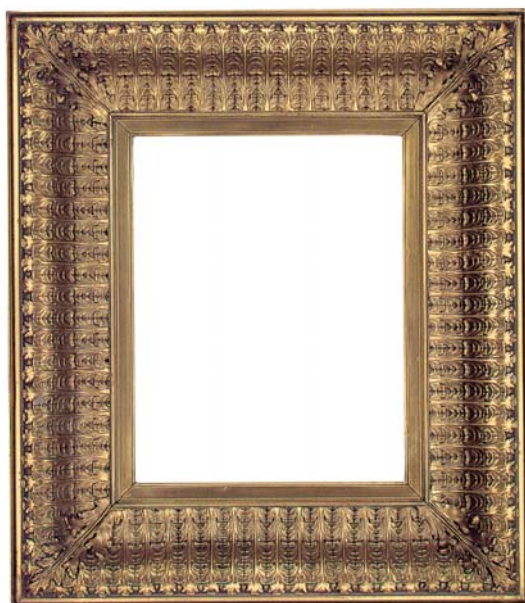
Among the mid 18th-century frames in the exhibition is an exquisitely carved transitional Louis XV-style gilt double sweep frame ornamented with shell centers and acanthus fan corners, it is top crested with a ribbon-tied leaf and flower cluster above a cabochon. One of a pair of frames crafted by the mid 18th-century frame maker Jean Cherin, it is stamped "CHERIN" on its verso—a rare occurrence, as it is often difficult to identify frame makers. In late 17th-century France, however, carpenters' (menuisiers) and cabinet makers' (ebenistes) guilds began to require that frame makers identify their work with stamps. Of 22 artisans who have been identified from these stamps, Jean Cherin is one of only two who were officially registered members of both guilds; he both built and carved the frames that bear his stamp. There is a similar frame at the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles.

The period from the latter part of the 19th century to the early decades of the 20th century was characterized by great creativity and craftsmanship in American frame making. One particularly rare frame in the exhibition was designed by the prominent architect



1.

The Secret Lives of Frames offers an inside look at historically significant antique frames from the 16th through 20th centuries. A special highlight is a rare Florentine carved and gilt Medici Auricular frame



2.

A series of special events exploring the fine art of framing and art restoration will be held throughout Lowy's centennial year:

Saturday, January 27, 2007, 2:30 p.m.,
Seventh Regiment Armory (Park Ave. at 67th Street), New York:

"The Secret Lives of Frames: From the Renaissance to the 20th Century," a lecture/demonstration with Lowy's president Larry Shar and Master Gilder R. Wayne Reynolds. Larry will lecture on the stylistic differences and similarities of frames from a variety of periods and countries, while Wayne will demonstrate restoration techniques used in gilding and casting ornamentation. Signed copies of *THE SECRET LIVES OF FRAMES: One Hundred Years of Art and Artistry* (Filipacchi Publishing) by Deborah Davis will be available. The event is free with admission to the Winter Antiques Show. (For more details, visit www.WinterAntiquesShow.com.)

Tuesday, February 13, 2007, 4:00 – 7:00 p.m.,
Christie's, 20 Rockefeller Plaza, New York:

"The Secret Lives of Frames: 100 Years of Art and Artistry," a gilding demonstration followed by a dialogue with Larry Shar, president of Lowy, and author Deborah Davis. Larry and Deborah will discuss the art and history of frame making, art conservation and restoration, and exciting framing discoveries, while sharing lively anecdotes about the art world throughout Lowy's history. A book signing will follow. Free admission. (For further information and to reserve a space, please call 212-636-2699.)

Tuesday, March 6, 2007, 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.,
Lowy, 233 East 80th Street, New York:

"The Secret Lives of Frames: A Guided Tour of Lowy," a behind-the-scenes view of Lowy's century-old art and framing restoration workshops, where visitors will be able to meet its team of framing experts and master craftsmen. The event also includes a guided tour of the centennial exhibition *The Secret Lives of Frames: One Hundred Years of Art and Artistry from the Lowy Collection*. Free admission. Reservations are required; program is limited to 50 people. (To reserve a space, please call 212-861-8585.)

(continued from page 3)

Centennial Exhibition: *The Secret Lives of Frames*

designing the Paris Metro stations. Guimard also designed furniture and picture frames to complement his interiors, such as the Castel Beranger, a legendary apartment building in Paris. Like English artist William Morris and American architect Stanford White, Guimard believed that the objects in an environment should express the space's prevailing aesthetic. This small, exquisite frame, possibly intended for a photograph, captures the elegance, drama and highly stylized nature of the Art Nouveau movement.

During the exhibition, Lowy will be open to the public 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Monday through Friday and 12:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Saturday. Telephone: 212-861-8585. Website: www.lowyonline.com ■

LOWY

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Frame left: Italian carved and gilt frame with Sansovino style ornamentation, early 17th century.

Other selections from *The Secret Lives of Frames* Page 3:
1. Spanish Charles II-style carved, gilt, and polychrome panel frame with extended corners and faux-leather punchwork designs, late 17th century. 2. American gilt composition frame of ogee profile and continuous rows of leaf ornament designed by Stanford White, early 20th century. 3. French stained mahogany frame designed by Hector Guimard in the Art-Nouveau style, early 20th century. 4. Italian carved, gilt, and polychrome frame of reverse profile with spread winged eagles at corners, late 18th century. 5. American carved and gilt frame in the Renaissance style by the Boston firm of Carrig-Rohane, 1907.

Centennial Celebration

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