

# Style Snapshot



By Bettina von Roenne and  
Friedrich G. Conzen Jr.

*A look at a frame, its characteristics, and history*

**What style of frame is this?** The Schinkel frame arose from the work of architect Karl Friedrich Schinkel, who designed predominately neo-classical and neo-gothic mouldings as well as picture frames in renaissance and baroque styles.

**Where is it from?** Schinkel lived and worked in Berlin. The architect's largest framing project, with over 600 frames, was carried out for Berlin's Gemäldegalerie (old master paintings). These were exhibited in the Altes Museum, built between 1823 and 1830 based on a design by Schinkel. He also developed highly elaborated frames matching the style of the paintings. Before and after the museum project, he designed frames for the Prussian royal family, private collectors, and his own collection as well as creating altar frames for churches.

**What time period is it from?** The oldest known Schinkel frame was manufactured in 1812 for his painting "Der Morgen" (Old National Gallery, Berlin). The latest design sketch dates to 1839, one year before his fatal illness. The 1820s were his most productive period for museum frames as well as for altar frames.

**Who was instrumental in its development?** Karl Friedrich Schinkel was born 1781 north of Berlin. There he studied architecture from 1798 to 1800. Before becoming famous as an architect because of his numerous public contracts in Prussia, he worked as a painter. Schinkel was much sought-after as an architect and artist. His buildings, paintings, sketches for furniture, picture frames as well as stage designs shaped his artistic environment significantly. His designs were all very much in vogue. Schinkel died in 1841.

**What are the defining/common characteristics of this frame?** Schinkel always cared about the harmony between frame and painting. His rather plain neo-classical and neo-



*This 1506 work by Luigi Besozzi is framed in a Schinkel museum frame, 92.8 x 69.3 cm, profile number 3, and hangs in Staatliche Museen zu Berlin. Gemäldegalerie.*



*Schinkel c1832 corner ornament is composed of wood, lead ornaments, gesso, and gilding. From the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin. Gemäldegalerie.*

*(Continued on page 63)*

(Continued from page 64)

gothic museum frames matched the older patinated paintings with matte gilding. His gilded frames were decorated with lead ornaments, which were easily bent into the mouldings. A large number of different designs were used by Schinkel, making it difficult to identify Schinkel frames. It is often necessary to compare the frames with Schinkel's design sketches.

**What design departures might be seen on some frames of this style?**

Schinkel was groundbreaking in using historical ornaments for picture frames in general. He incorporated neo-classical, neo-gothic, neo-renaissance, neo-baroque, and even neo-rococo elements. For example, Raphael's "Madonna Colonna" in the Gemäldegalerie in Berlin was framed in a Schinkel frame in Renaissance style.

**What type of artwork would this frame most likely house?** More than 200 paintings of Berlin's Gemäldegalerie are still presented in Schinkel frames. In addition, some of his altar frames remain in good condition. He also designed frames for different artist friends, such as Ludwig Catel and Carl Joseph Begas.

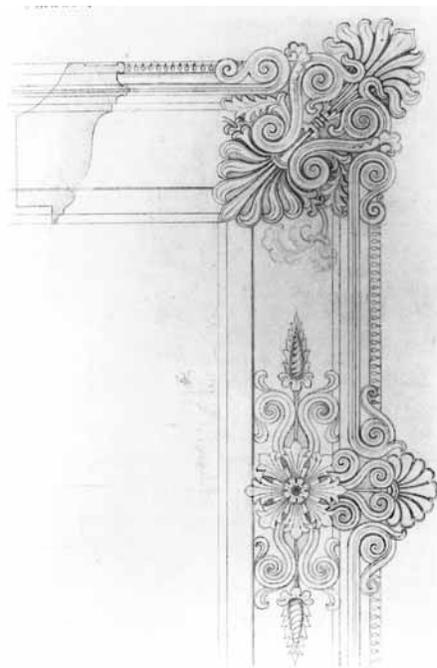
**What furnishing/interior style accompanied these frames in their time?** In most cases, Schinkel did not just design the outside shape of a building but also its interior, including the frames. He often created neo-gothic or neo-classical architectural designs with matching frames.

**Additional comments**

Original Schinkel frames are rarely found and traded. There are several reproductions of his designs and indi-



*A renaissance frame by Schinkel surrounds Raphael Sanzio's "Madonna Colonna" in the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin. Gemäldegalerie.*



*Schinkel's design sketch of corner and middle ornaments; from the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin. Kupferstichkabinett.*

vidual characteristic ornaments. For an exhibition at Berlin's Gemäldegalerie, a catalog was published by curator Bettina V. Roenne, "Ein Architekt rahmt Bilder: Karl Friedrich Schinkel und die Berliner Gemäldegalerie" Deutscher Kun-

*Karl Friedrich Schinkel made this museum frame in 1827-1830. It features lead ornaments and gilding and is 11 cm wide. It hangs in the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin. Gemäldegalerie.*

stverlag 2007. Roenne's dissertation about Schinkel's entire framing opus, "Schinkel rahmt. Die Bilderrahmen Karl Friedrich Schinkels," is ready for publication. ■

**Friedrich G .Conzen Jr.** is the managing director of F. G. Conzen in Düsseldorf, Germany. The fine art service company was founded in 1854 and specializes in high quality picture frames. F. G. Conzen is one of the leading suppliers to German museums, fine art galleries, and collectors. Catalogs and more information are available at [www.conzen.de](http://www.conzen.de) or via email at [conzen@conzen](mailto:conzen@conzen).

**Bettina von Roenne** studied art history and wrote her dissertation about Schinkel frames in Berlin. She lives and works as freelance curator and author in Düsseldorf, Germany. Sponsors are welcome for the publication of the dissertation. She can be contacted at [bettinavonroenne@gmx.de](mailto:bettinavonroenne@gmx.de).