

Question: How do I choose the right art for my home?

Answer: Let art be the muse for the design of a room. A piece of original art, no matter its value, can be the start of a beautiful room. Successful art draws an emotion out of the viewer, the same as with a great room. The success of a room will rely on one's passion toward their art. I recommend only buying art which speaks to you, either with humor, compassion or outstanding beauty.

Art should never be purchased to match a room. The result will not benefit the art or the room. The approach should be similar to the selection of fabrics and finishes—look for a variation of textures and ranges within a color scheme to add interest. The art and surroundings should not compete with one another. For example, a painting of the ocean may not be the optimal choice for a deep blue, beige or light blue room. In order for the art to add interest, it should have additional colors. A large format photograph of the sea, but with a red row boat or unexpected pink beach ball, would work in the blue/beige room because you've added an element of surprise.

Mixing art genres with furniture styles also can add interest to a space. In a dining room with Regency-period chairs and a crystal chandelier, one might expect a bucolic country scene in a Rococo-style gold leaf frame. Why not try the unexpected? A contemporary abstract or a 20th century print, if framed appropriately, would add depth to the space.

Black and white art, in a photograph or a print medium such as an etching or lithograph, can work in any room. Grouped together in simple frames, these pieces provide a large visual impact. There is a lot of photography available today, so it's best to buy limited-edition work. The general rule is the larger the edition, the less costly the piece.

The art should be framed to "pop" off the wall. Simple white wood frames add great contrast to a boldly painted wall. Use white mats, as opposed to color mats, to create breathing space between the art and the wall. For paintings on canvas, a frame will finish the art, creating a more formal appearance. Leaving the canvas unframed is best suited for abstract work.

Limited-edition prints are an affordable method for obtaining art by famous artists. Auctions also provide a great opportunity to obtain art. When buying art at auction, it's important to get the item's condition report. If you cannot view the piece in person, follow up on the condition report directly with the auction house. It's also best to buy art unframed. If the piece is framed, be aware there could be a hidden imperfection, or the framing could not be archival, which will decrease the value. If the piece is framed, sometimes the framer will be noted on the back. It's a good idea to contact the framer and inquire on his or her framing method. The provenance (origin) is important when purchasing at auction.

Online viewing of gallery Websites and upcoming auctions is a great tool to preview art, but I highly recommend the final purchase be made in person. Texture is very difficult to capture when viewing a piece on a computer monitor, and color can be distorted. Size also is difficult for most people to envision on the computer screen. Viewing gallery Websites will provide an opportunity to view all artists represented by a particular gallery, not just the current gallery show.

Finally, I suggest home owners begin their collection with small pieces. Finding the right location for art in a home will be easy if your passion for the piece is grand. 🍷

— Jennifer B. Meyer, allied member, ASID

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