

Head and Deck?

Contributed by Savanna Redman
Wednesday, 09 April 2008

Mother Nature outdid herself when using the Caribbean as her canvas. Our eyes never tire of the dazzling sea views and bright tropical flowers that surround us. However, she has left the inside of our homes to our imagination. Have fun and infuse your home with a warm personality. Make it feel more inviting and spacious.

Designers have long known that by adding artwork and a splash of paint you can easily enhance the ambience of a house, changing it into a home filled with charm and the illusion of more space, which will boost its real estate value. What interior designers cannot do for you is to collect art with your heart. The difference between a home that is "decorated" with art versus one displaying artwork that has been collected with love is always obvious—and you never grow tired of the things you love.

Give yourself permission to follow your own taste and instincts.

Make a statement about your life. Remember, art does not need to match the sofa or be expensive, so buy what you like and can afford. Build a collection that reflects your individual personality. Spend time looking; discover the styles that move you. Remember that your choices are unlimited: original paintings by contemporary artists, florals, landscapes, seascapes, abstracts, prints by old masters, antique photographs, et cetera.

If you love a painting from the beginning, you will find pleasure in how it connects to a deeper place within your soul. Like your favourite piece of music or poetry, it seems to draw you in from the moment you experience it and it never loses that quality. This is the truest value of art. Someday down the road, if it turns out that your purchases are worth a small fortune, then you will have had a rare double pleasure. Most likely you will not part with it, even knowing its current value, so buy that with which you connect.

Creating beauty and balance: Now that you have your unique collection, enjoy yourself and hang each piece. Sometimes you will discover that when you step back from your displayed artwork, there is something that is not quite right—you just haven't achieved the dazzling effect you desired. This "not quite right" feeling usually derives from the negative space of a wall competing for balance. It is easier if you can imagine a painting as a window at eye level, about six to eight inches above your comfortable couch, enabling you to gaze "through" it.

In a hallway, entry or kitchen—anywhere that you would be standing more than sitting—place the centre of the image around 66 inches off the floor—the view through your window of art. This way, a variety of paintings of different sizes and shapes can be placed around a room, if the centres of the paintings are all at the same height. Don't worry about where the tops and bottoms of the frames are; your eye will naturally centre you and balance the frames in their spaces.

An assemblage of small framed images can make a great focal point in any room if they fall into one style or media, like a collection of old black and white photographs or pen and ink sketches. By using frames made from the same materials, even if they are not matching in style, you will knit together your group. Natural wood frames, metal, or lacquered woods are all great on their own, but not mixed in a group, so if you are starting from scratch, consider matching the frames for a contemporary look, or select a mix of similar frames for an eclectic mood.

You can further enhance the unity of the collection by selecting the same mat colour and mat size for all images. Family photos, travel shots and small watercolours can be attention-grabbing when grouped in this way.

If you have your doors and windows open to the trade winds, as I do on most days, a small daub of Blue Tac under the bottom edge of the frames will keep your collection hanging straight, even on blustery days. (Blue Tac is a removable sticky putty that holds securely but won't harm the wall). Placing this collection a hand's distance above the furniture helps to anchor it and prevent the feeling of it floating off into space.

You can get a good idea of how to arrange multiple pieces by laying out your art on the floor, keeping the pieces about three inches apart, in an area equal to the wall space available. Move each piece around until you feel you have achieved a nice balance. Then transfer that layout to the wall by measuring and marking the wall lightly in pencil or white chalk.

A large painting, handcrafted wall hanging or tapestry can make a spectacular focal point and lend a sense of tranquil

order to a room.

Enhance a large work of art and anchor it into its surroundings by altering the wall colour behind it. Think of the wall as a larger mat and frame. The best way to select the perfect colour for a wall is by choosing one within the artwork itself. Finding the exact colour match is a snap if you lay a selection of paint chips next to it. If the colour you like is too bright or bold for the walls, move up to a lighter shade in the same hue.

To truly make the piece glow on centre stage, paint all of the walls surrounding your art in this new colour, then paint the ceiling in a darker shade of the same. Using the example shown, one possible choice for the wall colour would be a soft blue from the background.

Note: While it is true that most galleries paint their walls white, this is not done to enhance the appearance of the artwork. White is used out of necessity, as a gallery is constantly changing artists, styles and media. White is the only colour that can be relied upon not to clash with the next exhibit.

If you would like to hang a piece of artwork over the couch or bed, make it substantial.

For example, if your couch is seven feet wide, the artwork should be at least two-thirds of that, and placed no more than six to 10 inches above it. A 60-inch wide painting would balance nicely and visually fill the area, where a smaller painting would look anemic in the large space.

If you have a small painting that is exactly what you want to see over the bed or couch, find another painting or two in a comparable style, frame them in a similar way, and either form a straight row (if they are the same dimensions) or create a balanced grouping that will span from two-thirds to the full width of the bed or couch.

With all of this advice, remember: there are no hard and fast rules for the collecting or placement of artwork in your home. Have fun with it and enjoy the process and soon, by experimenting and adding unique pieces of art, you will add value to your estate. Plus, you will have the added joy of infusing your home with a warm personality and making the rooms feel more inviting and open to your family and guests.

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