



# THE JOY OF ADDING ART TO YOUR HOME

by Paola McDonald

A big part of the interior design process involves incorporating artwork. Whether it employs the client's precious collection of fine art or reproductions we've found to fit the client's space, artwork is an important element for a completed, warm, inviting and personal space. It is a very personal element, which should evoke emotion and reaction from those who are experiencing it – and reflect feelings the homeowner wants to convey about their space. Is it relaxing? Stunning? Humorous? Warm? Cutting-edge? Art selection also requires careful consideration of size, scale and lighting as well as proper framing and placement. Every designer would love to be presented with a client's treasured piece to serve as inspiration for the entire project, including colors, textures and lines – however, that is not always the case. But that doesn't have to be a deterrent to an amazingly coordinated

space. In this month's article I would like to share with you tips for incorporating artwork into your interior design as well as information about some great local artists and art resources to help you start your own unique collection.

## The Do's and Don'ts of Selecting Art for your Space

**Do:** Art should be personal. It should be selected based on your reaction to it. Whether it is an intense emotion or a serene feeling it evokes, the art you choose should speak to you. When selecting artwork for your home, make sure it is something that you love and that evokes feelings you want to experience over and over, every time you see the piece.

**Don't:** You do not necessarily have to select artwork based on how your space is designed. If you have a strong reaction to the art, and just have to have it, go for it. There are ways to make it work in your space, even if the colors



are not exactly correct. Instead, “think of art in a room like punctuation in a sentence. It should lead your eye around the space to accentuate key features, in turn creating visual syntax.” ([twfineart.com](http://twfineart.com))

**Do:** Visit local, regional or national galleries of art to study what styles, colors or mediums attract you most. You may be surprised at which pieces and genres draw you

in! Consider whether you prefer the richness of an oil painting, the softness of pastels or watercolors, the boldness of pop art prints, the intricate details of ethnic weavings, or the raw power of fine art photography. We are fortunate to have so many distinguished galleries in our greater metro area – make plans to visit one soon!

**Do:** Consider shopping locally for unique artwork. There are many local resources, like the Western Loudoun Artist Studio that offers an annual tour of local artists' studios, free and open to the public. Through their website ([www.wlast.org](http://www.wlast.org)) you can get a list of the local artists who participate in the event. Neighboring Warrenton has a few nice galleries to view fine local works. You can also visit the Torpedo Factory Art Center in Alexandria for 82 artist studios, six galleries, two workshops and art classes and educational programs, if

you are interested in creating your own personal art ([www.torpedofactory.org](http://www.torpedofactory.org)). Through these resources you can find a variety of styles and price points to fit any budget.

**Don't:** Box yourself into a certain medium. Look beyond paintings or prints and consider photography, sculpture, mixed media pieces, quilts, tapestries or weavings, or mosaics. Many types of plaster treatments, tile and woodwork certainly qualify as art as well. And don't forget to take notice of pieces you already own, or are part of an heirloom collection. Sometimes a new mat or a different location will bring new life to an item.

### Installation

Once you've selected the perfect piece of art, now it's time to consider how you are going to install it. “Proportion is key, scale the artwork to fit the space. Lofty ceilings can

appear taller with a large vertical piece. Consider art arrangements, groupings of smaller pieces rather than one large piece. In busy rooms, bold statements work well to break up the space!" ([twfineart.com](http://twfineart.com))

Another consideration (one we take on in each and every design project) is color. Do you want to highlight one color from your art with accents throughout the room? Or does your piece contain many colors, suggesting a subtle, neutral palette for the rest of the décor? Does your art evoke a certain feeling which can be highlighted with surrounding color? Balancing color throughout the room, with wallpaper, paint, textiles, flooring, furniture and accent pieces is of utmost importance. Local fine art photographer Jeff Miller suggests that, "There are many ways to incorporate imagery into a room and help set a mood or tone. Look at artwork or photography like you would for the purchase of a sofa or dining table – it should be of a style, color and format to fit in with the rest of the setting."

Location, location, location. Hanging art at eye level is often recommended, but is not the only way. Consider the overall space and how the height of the art will impact it. Often higher ceilings call for a slightly higher installation while other times, the space and its furnishings may call for a lower installation. Don't forget to take into account the room usage – if people are generally sitting while in the space, consider hanging the art lower. Take a step back and consider the overall impact of the art prior to choosing its installation height.

Scale. It is important to consider the scale of an art piece as it relates to where you want to install it in the home and how you

want it be seen. According to Jeff Miller, "People new to art collecting often purchase small pieces, but to be most eye-catching, bigger is better." When considering a piece, really give thought to where you are going to place it in your home and make sure that it will have impact you are intending. For example, if you are looking to fill a large wall, a small piece may need to be collaged with other pieces or it may look too minuscule in the space. It is important to consider how you will display the piece and its scale before making the investment.

**Lighting.** Lighting is an important consideration for your art installation. According to local artist Kurt Schwarz, "...make sure they are positioned out of direct sunlight. Use lighting to get rid of glare and shadows – don't place lights directly across from the art." Also try to stay away from fluorescent bulbs around your artwork. Instead, opt for bulbs that replicate daylight. To accent and highlight your artwork appropriately, consider picture lights. There are a number of styles and colors available on the market to fit any design aesthetic. Many of the styles are available as plug-in options so no messy construction is necessary.

If your artwork cannot be altered in size, consider a larger mat, or thicker frame to give your art some oomph, or a smaller frame with no mat if you need the artwork to be on the smaller side. A professional framer should be skilled at selecting frames and mats that are perfect for your piece and can assist you with the sizing details. Sometimes a frame itself is beautiful – perhaps a mirror or subtle fabric pattern would suit it well?

One more Do: DO enjoy adding art to your home!



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