

## HOW TO DISPLAY ART IN THE HOME

**Natalie Morgan-Davies, art dealer & owner of MORGAN-DAVIES ART, shares her thoughts on displaying art in the home.**

I've always believed that art is one of the main factors in turning a house into a home. Perfectly displayed artwork can be the finishing touch for any discerning interior scheme.

There are four key factors to consider when introducing artwork to your home. Get these right and the results will enhance your home; these factors can all make or break a room.

### **1. PLACEMENT**

If you have several walls to fill & haven't purchased with a specific space in mind, then don't be in a rush to hang. Sit the artwork in the room you've chosen for a few days first.

Artwork hung between open-plan rooms can create an easy divider between the two spaces, without blocking movement through the use of furniture.

Add large-scale artwork in a busy space to create a sense of balance.

Try not to hang works in line with any major lines in the room, like tops of windows or door frames.

Be conscious of your art works' composition & subject matter. In smaller, or tighter spaces, don't hang artwork that needs to be viewed from a distance. Instead substitute it for a different painting, or try a mirror instead.

Consider a dark backdrop to hang artwork upon. Dark painted walls are excellent at highlighting colour in artwork, or offering a dramatic contrast.



artwork by Elizabeth Waggett



artwork by Stuart Redler

Artwork above beds in bedrooms can look really striking as replacement headboards.



artwork by Rakerman



artwork by Stuart Redler

A 'gallery wall' works really well in hallways or staircases. If they were individual pieces, or diptychs (pairs) it is better to hang at eye level – but here in this type of location the art gives the viewer an 'overall impression'.



artwork by Irene Prada



artwork by Irene Prada

A narrow hallway can be enriched by including a large artwork or statement piece at one end, drawing the eye down the length rather than the width. Sculpture or ceramic also works well at the end of a walkway or landing, with the right lighting & display pedestal. Even smaller works can create this effect, especially if teamed with an impactful frame.



artwork by Stuart Redler



artwork by Stuart Redler



**Heights:**

People often hang art too high, so always consider eye level before you place or hang your artwork.

General rule is that the centre of the artwork sits about 150cm from the floor. Obviously this will depend on if you need to hang above large mantelpieces, sofas etc & then the rules need to be bent a little!

In dining rooms & sitting rooms (where a seated position is most common) you can afford to bend the rules a little & hang artwork lower than usual.



artwork by Rakerman



artwork by Stuart Redler



artwork by Stuart Redler



artwork by Stuart Redler

Be sure to hang a maximum 25cm above a sofa or console (even down to 15cm if you don't feel it will be knocked by people's heads sitting on sofa). You want the work to relate to what is underneath it. Too high & it will appear 'floating'. Ground the artwork by placing it close to the object below it. If artwork is hung too high, it will feel disconnected from the rest of the room.



artwork by Elizabeth Waggett

### Groupings:

Grouping art en masse, or hanging a 'Gallery Wall' can add major impact, if you get it right! A 'gallery wall' works really well in hallways or stairways. If they were individual pieces, or diptychs (pairs) it is better to hang at eye level – but here in this type of location they work to give the viewer an 'overall impression'.

Don't be shy to mix it up...old & new, traditional & contemporary can look fabulous together. Odd numbers work well with multiple artworks. Even numbers will infer formality.

When hanging a uniform 'grid' gallery wall, hang as tightly together as possible if you want to create the most impact. A wall of black & white prints work wonderfully to create a more cohesive, uniform scheme.



artwork by Stuart Redler

## 2. SIZE/PROPORTION

If you have a large bare wall, don't make the mistake of hanging one small piece right in the middle of it. It will look lost & out of place.

Don't make the mistake of putting small pictures in small spaces to try to make the area look bigger. It does the opposite. Introduce a big picture in a small space. Oversize art can make tiny rooms feel more glamorous, as well as spacious.

One large piece that makes a statement & commands your attention in the room is much more preferable than feeling you need to hang something on every single wall.

## 3. LIGHTING

If hanging art on a highly patterned backdrop, spotlighting can help draw attention to the piece & subtly make the background recede.

Choose UV glass if budget permits, as it is also non-reflective as well as light protective.

A painting can be illuminated with a classic picture light, or more minimally, with an angled spot depending on the style of your interiors. The centre of the spot should ideally hit the centre of the painting, at an angle of 30-40 degrees to the vertical.

## 4. FRAMING

Always consider colour & size.

You could opt for white frames, as they don't distract from the art. Or match the frame colour to the majority colour in the composition to achieve the same effect.



artwork by Henrie Haldane





If ordering a bespoke frame, it could be painted in the exact same colour as the wall behind, to truly blend & let the artwork sing & dominate. We did this for a client using their Farrow & Ball colour palette.

If you have a small piece of art, don't be afraid of using a larger frame, leaving more white mount (ie space) around the image itself.

Find a good framer & spend some time looking at different frames, as well as mount options. Framing decisions should never be rushed, as frames really can enhance or suffocate the art within. The frame should draw your eye to the art, or at least not distract from it.

If hanging a group/gallery wall, you could use just one colour of frame throughout, especially if the subject matter & or sizes differ greatly. It will add a harmony & unity to the collection.

If budget permits, invest a little extra in UV glass, especially if you're hanging light sensitive artwork as it will protect your investment.

If you know your artwork is destined for a highly patterned backdrop, try a deep (wide) mount to avoid any visual confusion or the artwork becoming lost on the wall.

Don't feel you have to go for a modern frame with a contemporary work of art. Highly gilded, elaborate & ornate can sometimes look fabulous with a contemporary picture. Just be careful that it still highlights rather than overpowers the artwork.



artwork by Rakerman



artwork by Elizabeth Waggett