



ART & SOUL

Looking for an affordable way to liven up your walls? Leading interior designers explain everything you need to know about choosing art for your home, including budget places to buy, printing your own pictures and framing options.

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Wall art can be the powerful starting point for a room's decor or the final flourish that draws disparate threads together – or something in-between. It can harmonise with your furnishings or add edge-of-the-seat pizzazz.

“Never underestimate the impact art can give to a space – it can instantly change the vibe, energy and overall colour scheme,” says Ruth van Overbeek of Kaamer Design. But how to select the piece that's right for you and the room, especially on a humble budget? And how do you hang prized finds to full effect? These tips from three top interior designers will put you in the picture.

MAKE THE CONNECTION

“Art should invoke emotion, whether it is joy, drama or intrigue,” says Mikayla Rose of Heartly. “That should be the first consideration. It should not sit blandly in a room without any relationship to you or the space.” In short, trust your instincts – you know what you like.

“Art is so personal and often I'm after a first response from a client,” says Jacque Yates of Three Little Pigs. “I don't want them to think about it too much, but rather it's what makes their heart skip a beat and makes them smile.”

GET IN THE MOOD

Consider the space. “Let the art harmonise with the room or act as a striking contrast,” says Ruth. “A minimalist, monochromatic room might benefit from bold, colourful abstract art, while a traditional or rustic room might suit landscapes or classical pieces.”

And the colours should complement or subtly contrast with the room's palette. “Never seek the perfect match – look for a piece that incorporates one or two of the key colours in your decor or introduces fresh colour for added depth.”

DIY DECORATING

Think outside the square, even in 3D. Art is everywhere. “A textile hung on a timber frame could add texture and visual interest,” says Jacque. Or use your wall for precious collections of tribal masks, straw hats or other woven pieces, such as those by Craft Enterprises. For bigger budgets, floral sculptures by Tracey Deep create spectacular textured centrepieces

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Clockwise from top left: a Belynda Henry painting adds an injection of colour to a Hearty project; a bold work by Melbourne artist Susan Trigg inspires the colour scheme in this Three Little Pigs design; a gallery wall in mostly black and white by Three Little Pigs transforms the dining area of a New York apartment; JuJu hats from Craft Enterprises are used as wall art by Kaamer Design. Opposite: a Forman Art & Framing print creates a focal point in a Hearty interior.

with a natural, earthy flair.

Or you can get creative with images. You can have any image you fancy (assuming no copyright issues) including masterpieces past and present, thanks to Giclée digital high-tech printing. Its cost-effective reproductions appear amazingly true to the original artwork. The Poster Club offers a great collection of contemporary prints. So too does Bluethumb Art.

SIZE MATTERS

Scale is crucial, says Ruth. “A large piece can create a focal point in a room and works well in open, spacious areas, while smaller pieces are perfect for cosy corners or gallery walls.” Also consider the artwork relative to the furniture and wall space: “It should feel balanced with what else is in the room – neither overwhelming, nor lost.”

IN THE FRAME

Never underestimate the frame and the mount. “Minimalist spaces work well with sleek, black or white frames, while ornate frames complement traditional pieces,” says Ruth. But for budget-watchers, ready-made frames from Country Road or Ikea are great for standard sizes, “standard” being the operative word – they don’t suit odd-sized pieces.

“I love a mount to set the artwork back from the frame,” says Mikayla, who also specifies art glass to minimise reflection. Best choices for the mount? Either white or off-white to make the piece sing.

GET THE HEIGHT RIGHT

Placement is crucial. Hang art at eye level (typically 150cm from the floor to the centre of the piece), says Ruth. And leave a 20cm breathing space between the frame and any furniture.

But this is not a hard-and-fast rule. It also depends on the piece or the collection. Larger pieces may require

more space, while collections of smaller artworks may like to get cosy. “Most people prefer art at eye level, but that doesn’t work for a gallery or for a family with one small person and others 200cm, like my son!” says Jacque.

PLAY TO THE GALLERY

A gallery wall makes a space layered and visually complex, so ensure it doesn’t appear chaotic by working tonally and ensuring breathing space between the pieces. “If you want to calm it down, go for a gallery in black and white or pale serene colours,” says Jacque. And plan it first. “Trace the pieces onto butcher’s paper and plan out the spacing using the

outlines on the wall,” says Mikayla.

Galleries with smaller, lighter items can be a boon to renters, for whom picture hooks may be taboo. “We completed a gallery wall in a rental New York apartment,” says Jacque. “The client didn’t want to spend a lot, nor was she allowed to put up 50 hooks, so we used removable picture hanging strips.” With spectacular results. “In mostly black and white, the sophisticated images totally transformed the dining area.” ●



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ON THE HUNT

Vintage or antique stores are a treasure trove of original art and frames, explains Kaamer Design’s Ruth van Overbeek. You can find treasures tucked away in unlikely corners, so have a rummage. Check out Nook Vintage and The Vintage Shed in Melbourne, or Mitchell Road Antique & Design Centre in Sydney.

Affordable Art Fairs, held annually in Sydney, Melbourne (above) and Brisbane, are a fantastic way to discover original works by emerging artists within a reasonable budget, says Jacque Yates of Three Little Pigs, who eagerly attends the Melbourne iteration every year. Similarly, shop local for rising talent. “Budding artists often sell their work at approachable prices. Melbourne has a gamut of galleries, along with local markets, where you find emerging artists’ works,” she says.

Or go global – online, the world’s literally at your fingertips. Some top Australian recommendations from the three experts: The Print Emporium, The Poster Club, Forman Art & Framing and Greenhouse Interiors.

