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THE ART OF SELECTING WALL *Art*

By Melissa Davis

Selecting art can be one of the most fun parts of the design process. It's a chance for homeowners to express their personality and truly pick something that speaks to them. As much as it can be a romantic meandering shopping experience, my client's also tell me it feels like the most difficult. Taking the plunge from ALL those giant blank walls is scary.



Some might say to jump in and buy a piece you love and then design the room around it. It happens and I've seen some beautiful spaces with art collections that truly do play the starring role. For me, I prefer to select my client's art, towards the end of a design project. That is after the furniture, the drapery and the hard surfaces and around the same time as the paint. Art can be the finishing detail that softens and connects the overall design or, it can be a bold demanding statement. It's tricky to pinpoint the perfect visual weight, scale and colours without the majority of the room already complete. Fear not, there are a few simple things to keep in mind that will help you take the plunge with confidence.

Here are my top 4 considerations before taking hammer to nail

SCALE

If the piece or pieces are going over furniture, use the outside limits of the bed, credenza or couch as your guide. Don't extend the art beyond those outside edges. So if the sofa is six feet wide, your art should be under six feet in

width. Anything bigger will look and feel too top-heavy. Again the same rule applies for multiple pieces of art. Plan groupings of art to fit within the overall boundaries a single larger piece might.



FEATURE OR FILLER

Art can be a bold statement, striking up conversation and demanding attention. Large-scale canvases, graphic imagery and dark or bold colours will ensure the piece commands the attention you intended. On the other hand, a photograph framed to blend with the adjacent wall or a soft watery landscape will provide some relief from the vast blank walls but for the most part blend quietly with the overall palette. Spend a bit of time in the room beforehand and decide what your message and overall intent is for the piece.

STYLE

This is where there really are no rules. Art when done well expresses the journey and personality of the homeowners. A traditional piece can as easily live in a contemporary home as an abstract might in the den of a traditional home. A great tip to bridge the styles is the choice of frame. Selecting a frame that is in keeping with the overall design style and materials will easily connect the pieces. Like framing and old oil painting in a clean unadorned black frame.

PROPORTIONS

As a general rule of thumb take your cues from what is happening around the piece. If it's a tall, narrow wall without any furniture to worry about, then look to mimic the wall area by choosing a tall, skinny piece that fills the area with a nice bit of relief around it of six feet or so. You can also opt for two smaller pieces that when stacked visually fill the same tall thin area.

Remember not every piece need be the finest or most expensive. I love mixing investment paintings along with more personalized and affordable framed photography. One of my favourite ways to buy original art is to attend the more grass roots arts fairs showcasing emerging students. You can pick up original works starting at \$100.



Another terrific way to test out different styles and sizes is to opt for art rentals. Most major galleries offer the service, as does the AGO through their Rental Gallery. Typically, they'll credit part or all of the rental fee toward a purchase should you choose to keep something permanently. I've done it many times with clients and it's such a fun and useful way to explore your style.

Armed with these tips and tricks, you're ready to venture out and begin building your own art collection today. [oo](#)



Toronto-based celebrity designer and contractor **MELISSA DAVIS**, is known for her appearances, creative design and reno work produced for various HGTV shows. Her work has been profiled nationally in print publications. With almost

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