

# ART COLLECTING IS FOR EVERYONE

Finding pieces that fit your home doesn't have to be intimidating or expensive, just stick to what you like

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Art can serve as a finishing touch, a conversation piece, or a focal point in a room.



“It provides visual beauty, but it also is a layer of life that has a story to it,” says Whitney Forstner, founder of into/art. “And when we allow ourselves to be open to that story and connection, it’s fun and powerful.”

But choosing art for your home can be tricky. You want to collect pieces that have staying power, that will be relevant for many years and that you won’t grow tired of. That’s a tall order. Where do you start? And how do you know what or where to buy?

The right pieces are visually interesting and offer an emotional connection, but they don’t have to break your budget to be both beautiful and meaningful.

“We are all collectors,” Forstner says. “You don’t have to buy something from Sotheby’s. Frame your kid’s handprint, and that’s the beginning for a collection.”

We spoke with Forstner and another design specialist, Bridget Mallon, editorial director of Mydomaine and The Spruce, for advice on building your home art collection. Here are their suggestions.

## **DETERMINE WHAT YOU LIKE**

If you don't know where to start, spend time identifying your style. Do you gravitate toward photography or landscapes? Are you drawn to realism or abstract images? How do you feel about bold colours? Imagine what different pieces would look like in your home.

“Art isn't as intimidating as it might seem. You don't have to know art history to know what you like. You can fill your home with pieces that feel personal to you and fit your aesthetic,” says Mallon. “Art should make you happy when you look at it.”

Flip through magazines and catalogues to see how art is paired with design elements and other art. Take note of what speaks to you. Is it the contrast of a large abstract piece over an antique, or are you more interested in muted landscapes paired with contemporary furnishings?

Connecting with artists and understanding the story behind their pieces also creates an emotional attachment.

With artists documenting their processes through time-lapse videos and posting photos of their works in progress on Instagram, you can learn about how they work and what inspires them.

## **CONSIDER YOUR SPACE**

Your walls inform the size of the pieces needed, and your furnishings and accessories will need to pair well with the artwork you select.

“If someone has a big red sofa, we don't want a big red piece of art,” Forstner says. Instead, she looks for “something that doesn't compete, but complements.”

When she visits a home, Forstner gets a feel for the owner's style and colour preferences. She also asks her clients how a room is used and how they want to feel when they're in it.

For instance, in a family room, she may suggest more personal elements, such as family photos or prints from vacations.

In bedrooms, she recommends pieces with soft, muted colours, including landscapes with blues and greens, to create a relaxing vibe.

In kitchens, you can be more energetic and hang something unexpected and fun, such as an abstract with bold hues.

“The art follows the moods and modes of the space,” Forstner says.

## **DECIDE WHERE TO SHOP**

Galleries are an obvious place to start, but they can be overwhelming for newcomers. There are

other low-key venues where you can find art at a more affordable price, including local art shows and craft fairs.

Check museum gift shops for prints, or purchase postcards of artwork you like, then bring them home to see how the colours and motifs look in your space. For prints of paintings you see in museums, purchase copies through an online retailer such as Fine Art America, where you can choose the paper, mat, and frame.

Vacations offer another opportunity to explore art. Anything that reminds you of a getaway is a thoughtful way to tell your story and share happy memories.

For shopping on a budget, Mallon recommends big-box stores, such as Ikea. “They come pre-framed for people who might be intimidated by creating their own collection,” she says. “You just have to hang it, and you can’t beat the price point.”

To avoid a cookie-cutter look, Mallon recommends pairing mass-produced art from big-box stores with more sentimental pieces by local artists, or items sourced from thrift stores. If you buy all your art at a big-box store to create a gallery wall, “you lose out on the opportunity to really express yourself and your style through your art,” she says.

“Think of these big-box art pieces as building blocks that you can build o! of with more personal choices.”

Mallon also suggests purchasing prints from websites such as Society6 and the Poster Club. Online shops such as Minted and Etsy allow shoppers to support independent artists. Minted produces artists’ pieces, and through Etsy you can buy prints or digital downloads that you print at home or a store.

She says there’s an “emotional aspect when you feel like you’re supporting someone directly.” If you’re looking for something quirky or out of production, Mallon suggests trying estate sales, online auctions, and garage sales. Facebook Marketplace is one of her favourite venues for buying pre-owned pieces.

“People who are moving or redecorating are looking to sell quickly,” she says. “There are some really unexpected gems.”

Coffee table books are another gold mine of affordable art. Cut out the glossy pages, then mat and frame them. “There’s no limit to what can be considered art,” Mallon says.

## **PLAY WITH SIZE AND SCALE**

A large empty wall may leave you feeling eager to fill the void but be patient. Wait for the right piece.

“A blank wall is better than buying something you don’t like,” Forstner says. Measure your walls and consider scale; a cohesive, balanced collection includes a variety of sizes.

“It’s like a big puzzle,” she says. For big walls, Forstner suggests hanging two large pieces side by side, with three to five inches between them. “This usually looks best with abstracts and art created by one artist,” she says, “or a diptych, which is art that spans two large canvases with one image.”

When mixing several sizes, hang the largest piece on one side, then group smaller pieces on the opposite side. The grouping should not exceed the total size of the larger piece. Keep spacing consistent between the pieces.

Small art can make a statement, too. Forstner recommends grouping nine or 12 pieces from one artist to create a grid. “Variety is key,” she says. “You don’t want to have one big piece of art on every wall.”