

By Karen S. Weiner, owner of Idealspace Design



Sky Blue IV - Sebastien Fitch

Choosing artwork for a room is a challenging task for many home owners. What to choose, how to choose, exact placement, and making wise investments are among the concerns often expressed. In conversation with five local artists, a lot of good advice was obtained.

“Choose artwork because it talks to you, not because it matches the décor, or fills an empty space,” recommends Christopher John Riley. It is a simple concept, but too often people get caught up with what they think belongs rather than what means something to them. “Good art is art you will want to look at over and over again. Art chosen to match the drapes will be forgettable. A painting or sculpture can become like a treasured friend rather than just another object. It should say as much about you as it does about the artist,” says Sebastien Fitch. Choosing art is about more than finding a suitable piece; it is about finding a piece that matches you while adding a new element to the décor. While some people love traditional landscapes, others are drawn to vividly coloured abstracts, and neither is wrong, just as it is not wrong for one person to prefer classically-styled clothing and another to have an affinity for the latest trends.



Valasques - Vision of St. John - Christopher J



The Source - Alicia Surveyer



12 minis, 6 small pieces - Lisa Carney

Big or small, art must make a statement. Obviously it would not make sense to have one tiny piece alone on the longest wall of your home, but as Lisa Carney suggests, “Group small pieces by one artist together in matching frames to make a statement with small format art on a big wall.” And depending on the artist and the pieces selected, this can also be a wise investment; a dozen small pieces can have a comparable cost to one large painting, but in the future a collection may have a higher value than a single larger piece. The flip-side to this is pointed out by Alicia Surveyer: “A wall behind a couch, buffet, or bed has ample room for a large piece of art above. In fact, this will create a greater focus where there is already an emphasis.” How big is too big though? According to Riley, “Approximately 48-inches by 48-inches is a good size for a painting over a chesterfield in a room with 8-foot to 9-foot ceilings, but the centre of smaller paintings should be at the eye level of the viewer. In a group, each painting should be given breathing space.”

Other art forms have to be chosen with care. Sculptures require different display space; depending on size, medium, and other considerations, a pedestal or display case might be necessary, and your furniture layout will have to be carefully considered when purchasing. Bas-relief sculptures are a good choice for those who like the three-dimensional quality but lack the space for free-standing sculptures. Like a painting, a bas-relief can be hung on the wall, protruding minimally into your space.

**P**hotography is another common art choice, and varies from realistic to enhanced images. Photographic art can double as souvenirs, or can be chosen similarly to a painting: by finding a piece that speaks to you. Photographer Tiffany Orpana says, "Colour photographs can be art that stands out, while black-and-white images add to the simplicity of a décor. When selecting colour photographs, try to find images that have contrasting colours to add punch to a contemporary or stylized room." Likewise, black-and-white images can be used to add drama and contrast to an otherwise colourful space.



*Swing - Tiffany Orpana*

And what about reproductions? Fitch believes that "A conversation with the artist can bring an added dimension to the work and reveal not only the ideas, but the person behind its creation." It isn't a financial decision on the artists' parts to dislike the idea of reproductions, as they can easily sell countless copies of their own works. "Originals are always more appropriate - they breathe with a life of their own, which no reproduction can do. It is also more beneficial to the art community at large, and speaks to the owners' sense of taste," affirms Riley.

*All photographs courtesy of the artists. These artists are among those represented by Idealspace Design.*

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