

# Picture Perfect

From oil paintings, stretched canvases and kids' masterpieces to antique clocks and decorated plates – art offers myriad ways to customise your home.

By **Amanda van Wyngaardt.**

**A**rt in the home is as important as books on a shelf. It speaks volumes about the homeowner's personality, often revealing more secrets about what makes them tick than anything else they may own.

Yet buying and displaying artworks effectively can be daunting. "It takes courage to buy a piece of artwork that's out of the ordinary," says home stylist Jane Brown of Jane Brown Interiors. "You need to trust your personal taste, as well as consider the style of the room in which the piece will be displayed."

"You have to think about size, dimensions, colour – there's a lot to get right. But just one fabulous piece of art can easily make or break a room."

## CHOOSING ART

Jane warns that it's important not to be in a rush to purchase art. If you're unsure about what to buy, stand in front of the work and ask yourself what it communicates to you. "Everyone knows what moves them," says Jane. "Buy a piece that makes you feel something. Art should be inspiring. >>>



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## CREATE THE ILLUSION OF MORE SPACE

**Left:** A large artwork hung above a bed or sofa is striking and makes a room look bigger than it is by drawing the eye up. The golden rule is to make sure you leave some breathing space around the piece. **Opposite page:** For a playful feel, hang children's drawings together in a group.

uplifting, thought-provoking. If you're going to live with it, it should have an aspect that causes you to respond in some way."

When choosing art, decide what colours and textures you prefer, Jane advises. Attempt to understand the rationale behind the artwork, what the artist is saying. As you broaden your research and increase your knowledge, your taste will change accordingly.

#### **SPEND OR INVEST?**

Art is initially a decorative investment and should be viewed in the same light as other decor you would buy for your home. If, however, it goes beyond the merely aesthetic, it's important to familiarise yourself with the necessary skills to recognise a good buy.



**WALL-SIZE ART**  
Left: The digital era has created infinite potential for art at home. Photographs such as this can be blown up and printed directly onto a wall, just like wallpaper. Images on floor surfaces can work well, too. Provide your own photographs or choose from a catalogue. For more ideas, visit [www.bubblecreative.com](http://www.bubblecreative.com).

## “ART IS INSPIRING, UPLIFTING ... BUY A PIECE THAT MAKES YOU FEEL SOMETHING ... ”

There are plenty of books and websites on the subject of buying art. Find styles you like, determine what's good and why, how to avoid unfair pricing and other pitfalls. Once you're armed with a little knowledge, going along to art auctions can be a lot of fun.

Also, visit art galleries and look out for upcoming artists. The secret is to purchase an artwork early in an artist's career for a good price and then hang onto it. This way, you're not only getting a bargain, but supporting someone who is committed to a career in creative arts.

#### **THE RIGHT LIGHT**

"Natural light often works best for paintings and photographs," Jane says. After dark, downlights, tracklights and spotlights (in yellow) are ideal for paintings. For photographs, cool, blue lighting works best, she advises.

#### **HANG IT WELL**

It's important not to try to fill up the entire wall space, as there should be breathing space around the piece. For an ideal eye height, hang a painting about 1.50m from its centre point to the floor.

"The golden rule is to choose a big picture, as it makes the room look bigger," advises Dominic Maunsell, from Maunsell Wickes Gallery at Barry Stern Galleries in Sydney. "Once you've bought your largest painting – usually the one that goes behind the sofa or over the fireplace – everything else should fall into place," Dominic says. "And don't be scared of >>>



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experimenting with sculpture. Large or not so large, a beautiful sculpture will make a room sing.”

If you like grouping art pieces, approach the task as a theme, to avoid it appearing too busy. Cut out the sizes of your artworks in brown paper and position small groups together until you're happy with the combination. Then, having dealt with the mixing and matching, you're ready to drill. If you're really unsure, you can employ a professional picture hanger. This can cost \$30 to \$50 an hour, but it's a good idea, especially if you've just moved house.

### GOT YOU FRAMED

A good frame should complement, not overwhelm, an artwork. The style of the painting or photograph, as well as the period from which it dates, should be a good starting point. There are, however, no hard rules. A frame is about the presentation and protection of the artwork, and any good framer will make sure this is accomplished. The variety is enormous – from simple wooden frames to richly decorated and gilded ones – and prices depend on the material used, colouring and the finish.

Glass will protect certain artworks against ageing. A drawing or watercolour on paper will always require protection, as will something such as a tapestry, which would otherwise attract dust.

The American floating frame is another option that has become trendy – the artwork literally floats inside the frame, so that the stretcher frame remains visible from the sides.

### TOOLS YOU'LL NEED

To hang large and heavy works, such as a glass-fronted piece, use a drill with plugholes and screws. Screws with hooks help prevent the item from sliding off the screw.

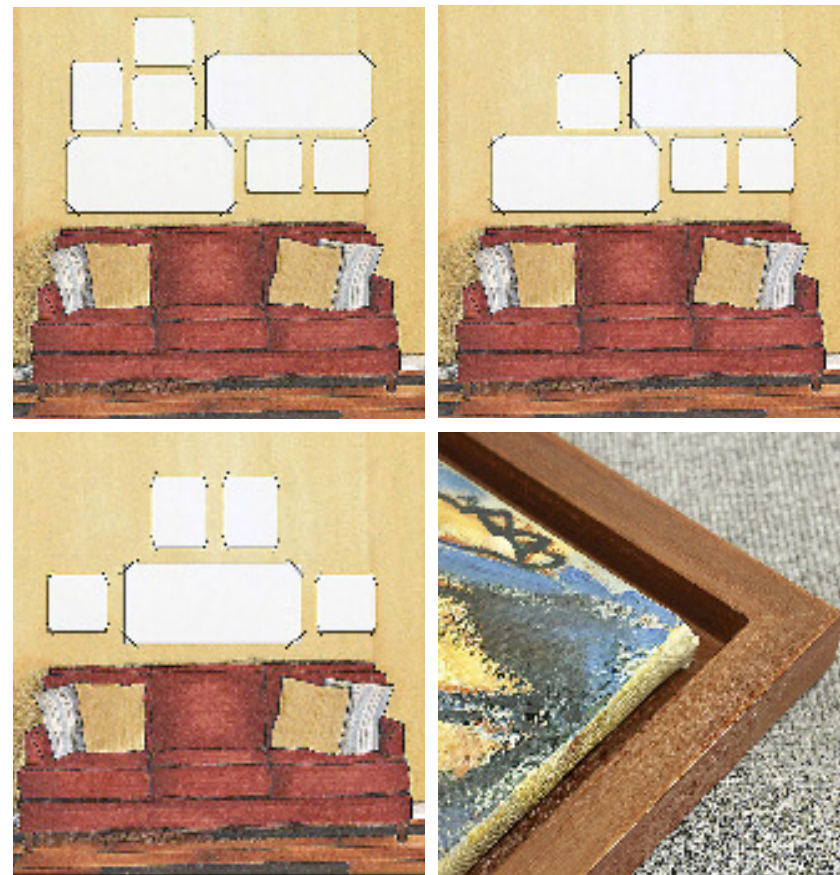
To hang a group of artworks or photos at the same height, use a pencil and long spirit level to mark out their position. Stick an envelope to the wall with masking tape right beneath the spot where you want to drill – this will catch the fine dust.

It's a good idea to make a cross with masking tape on the wall and drill through the tape to prevent the drill from slipping and damaging the plaster. ■

For more advice on home interiors, visit [www.janebrowninteriors.com](http://www.janebrowninteriors.com).

### FRAME BY FRAME

Below: When grouping artworks, it's a good idea to test how it will look first. Use brown paper and cut around the shapes that you want to hang, then try them on the wall in different formations until you find the one you like best. An American floating frame, such as the one pictured bottom right, allows you to see one frame inside another.



## CRAFTY COLLAGE

Making your own collage is fun and easy, suggests craft expert Kelly Doust. It doesn't even necessarily need to be fixed to paper or canvas – with a little know-how, you can turn a pin board into an inspiring work of art. Collect your favourite items – photos, cards, letters, ribbons, even old ticket stubs that may bring to mind good memories – and arrange them as you like within a second-hand frame.

### YOU WILL NEED

- A frame, salvaged from a market or op shop (it doesn't need glass or the backing board)
- Paint and brush (if needed)
- 5mm-thick corkboard, to fit in the frame
- Stanley knife
- Staple gun
- Thick cardboard backing (cut from large cartons)
- Small nails or masking tape
- A collection of things you love, such as cards, photos, pictures from magazines, fabric, bows, etc
- Drawing pins

### HOW TO MAKE IT

1. If your frame is looking a bit tatty, give it a lick of paint. You might want to paint the frame to better suit the room you'll be hanging it in.
2. Using your Stanley knife, cut the corkboard to the exact size of the size of the frame.
3. Insert the cork into the frame from the back, using your staple gun to secure it in place – 3-5 staples for each side should be enough.
4. Cut one or two thicknesses of cardboard to fit behind the cork to make a thicker depth for pinning into. Secure in place with a small nail in each corner or with masking tape around the edges.
5. Take all pieces you've collected for your collage and arrange them over your corkboard. Start pinning them in place for the most visually arresting layout.
6. Hang the finished work above your work desk, in your kitchen, above your dressing table or anywhere you need some daily inspiration.



For more fun projects, see *The Crafty Minx – Creative Recycling and Handmade Treasures* by Kelly Doust, published by Murdoch Books, \$39.95.

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