

The Finishing Touch

By Vivian Kistler, CPF, CMG

Framed art makes a house feel like a home and has a strong impact on setting the tone for restaurants, hotels, and business lobbies as well as offices and waiting rooms of all types. Except for extreme minimalist decor, which may use empty walls for the ultimate bare effect, art and other wall decor is an essential part of room design.

In homes, clients want either art that suits the chosen decor style and current trends or art that reflects their personal tastes. When people are seated in public spaces, their eyes tend to scan the area, and they are drawn to the images in front of them. Regardless of the setting, art sends a message.

What message should be conveyed? Think about the clientele. Who is the target client? How do you want them to feel in the space? For example, some medical facilities prefer art that is calming and neutral, such as pleasant landscapes with no storms or chaos and no people, creating a quiet mood and avoiding specific connections to a place. A physical therapy center may prefer bright, dynamic images that inspire strength and movement. A hotel may want art reminiscent of the local landscape or exotic scenes that take the viewer far away. While the wall coverings, furniture, and accessories play a big role in establishing the character of the space, the art in the room makes a clear statement.

Buying Pre-Framed Art

Buying art that is framed and ready to hang has always been the easiest method for designers, but never before has there been so much available. Between the showrooms at High Point Market and Las Vegas World Market Center, framed art in local frame shops and home decor shops, and the many online stores, there are plenty



A wall art grouping from FramERICA gives a hotel lobby sitting area a more stylish look, completing the design and making the setting more inviting.

Framed wall decor is an essential element for achieving great looks in both commercial and residential spaces



Framed wall art such as this selection from Artaisance, can make a corporate meeting room more professional and stimulating as in this grouping from Rockwell Art & Framing.



The layered, spare design of the framed wall art from New York Graphic Society provides a focal point for this modernist room.



The rustic style of a seaside inn is finished off perfectly by framed wall art from New York Graphic Society.

of sources no matter what your needs. There is no mystery with pre-framed art—what you see is what you get. If buying online and offered a selection of frame choices, you can usually view each frame on the art. Certainly there are a few problems with viewing online—the colors may not be accurate and the size is often not clear—that are very important considerations. You will find that companies that offer pre-framed art take their trend-tracking research very seriously; the art images and frame styles are current or even trend-forward.

Buying from Catalogs

It is great to visit a showroom to see the art in person whenever possible. The texture of the frame moulding, the vivid colors of the art, and the overall impact of the size can best be evaluated by actually viewing the art.



A contemporary bath is set off nicely by a modernist framed print and companion mirror in this image from Sherwin-Williams.



A hotel registration area impresses new guests with the right piece of art behind the counter, especially when coordinated with the counter design as shown in this image from Sherwin-Williams.

However, today's full-color catalogs provide excellent images that clearly show color and detail. Whether in print or online from a website, they are a convenient way to shop for art anytime. When choosing framed art from print catalogs or online, be sure to note whether the size listed is the outside frame size or the size of the frame opening. In most cases, the size will refer to the finished, outside size. In catalogs specifically for picture framers, the frame opening size may be used, but the finished outside size is usually listed as well.

Art on Canvas

Art on canvas is very popular, and it is no wonder. Regardless of the art knowledge or sophistication of the viewer, art on canvas is recognized as "real" art and is considered important. Even in the current decor environment, with its strong preference for contemporary style, canvases are often preferred over other types of art.

Most of the art on canvas in today's market is printed rather than painted. It is still possible, of course, to purchase actual paintings, but for many clients today this is not necessary and not even preferable. Thanks to modern printing methods, it is possible to print fine limited editions on canvas, most of which are varnished-like paintings, some of which are hand-textured after printing to better simulate the dimension of oil paintings.

A contemporary favorite is the "gallery wrap," art on canvas that wraps around the sides of a deep wooden support and is hung as is, without a frame. Everything from huge graphics (such as a single flower in a single color) to traditional scenes of Tuscany is available in this type of presentation. Another popular style is created by hanging a series of gallery-wrapped canvases of the same size and related subject matter in a grid layout of 4, 9, 16, or even more pieces. The canvases are often small or moderate-size squares, and the art is typically of simple shapes.



A corporate lobby receives a subtle but stylish touch from the framed wall art in this image from Sherwin-Williams.



Whether it's a hotel suite or an upscale residential project, the right framed wall art, such as this choice from Roma Moulding, provides a look that will please clients of all kinds.

Framed wall art from Roma Moulding provides a stylish, upscale look to this hotel bedroom.



A World Without Walls

Public spaces have always included vast open rooms, but today's open floor plans in homes have brought some of the techniques of designing for public spaces into the home environment. Defining areas with rugs and grouped furniture helps create a separate identity for rooms that no longer have walls to divide them. But what about framed art for those areas? Easels offer a great way to display framed art in today's homes. Framed art sitting on an easel can create a subtle room divider, fill an awkward corner, or add drama to an entryway or foyer. Available in black, white, brass, chrome, and other finishes and in several sizes, easels can accommodate any decor style.

Placing Art for Impact

When choosing placement for art, think about the job the art needs to do. One large framed piece has strong impact from a distance, while many small pieces draw the viewer in for a closer look. Wall art can define a decor theme—the rest of the decor may seem sort of Asian, but Japanese block prints and a framed kimono on the wall make it certain. Even if people do not remember the specific framed images, the message of the art is communicated and remembered.

When hanging a picture wall with frames of different styles and sizes, create alignments so the viewer's eye has lines to follow. These visual lines may be horizontal or vertical. If a picture wall contains many pictures, there may be several of these alignments to create a coordinated presentation. A picture wall naturally has



A print of a beach scene from New York Graphic Society provides the finishing touch to this sitting area.

numerous focal points, but the eye can travel from one to another comfortably if given pathways.

No matter the style of the decor, completing the look with the right wall art can turn any design into one that will be memorable and will provide the finishing touch to any environment. ■

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