

# MAKE AN IMPACT WITH ART



Making art stand out can be challenging, but your pieces will pack a visual punch with these 10 tips from interior designers.

BY CAROL BROCK

Art has the power to inspire, infuriate, communicate and exasperate. But when improperly displayed, artwork misses the chance to do just that.

"Always think of making art the most visible thing in a room," says Jerome Abecassis of Divano Designs in Miami, Fla. "That's the number-one rule. Furniture and colors change, but art never goes away. It stays art."

When a piece of art fully resonates with you, it makes sense to display it prominently so it can inspire you and your guests. Driving a nail in the wall and hanging a painting is a good first step, but, according to Abecassis and Pangaea (who goes by a single name) of Pangaea Interior Design in Portland, Ore., there are tricks to make art stand out—and mistakes that can detract from it.

Here are their top 10 ideas for making art a focal point in your home.





DavidDuncanLivingston.com, courtesy Cary Bernstein Architect, www.cbstudio.com



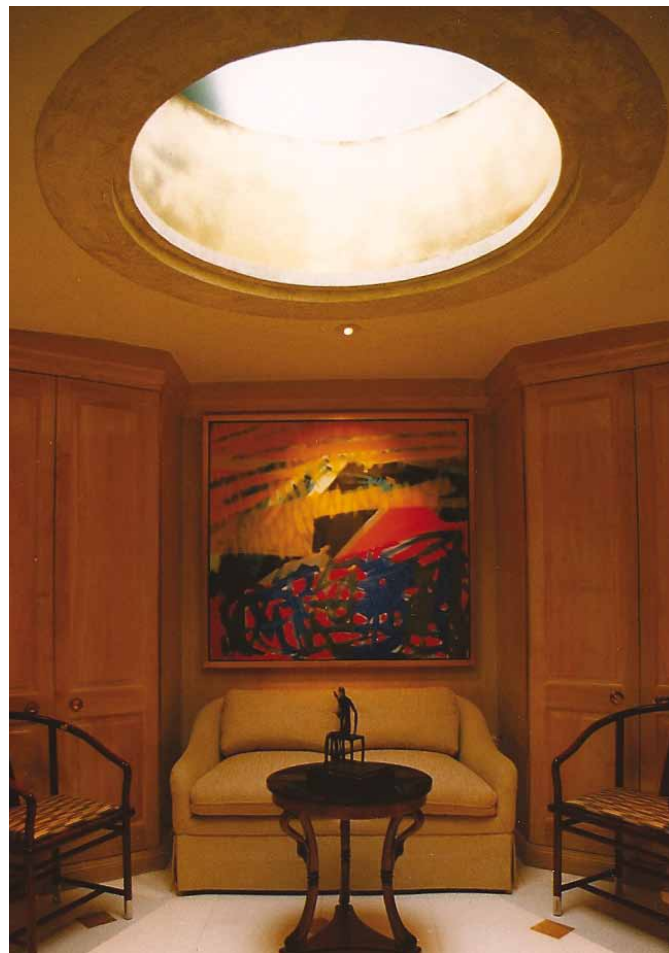
Mark Edward Harris, courtesy Tracy Murdock Interior Design, www.tracymurdock.com

**REPEAT LINES IN THE ART.** "Line repetition helps draw attention to the art, and reinforces it in a room," Pangaea says. This sofa's curvy black lines mimic the curves in the woman's face, while the sofa colors match those in the artwork. The vases beneath the green painting at left repeat the artwork's wavy shapes, increasing that painting's visual strength.



Photos: Jerry Jacobs, www.jerryjacobsdesign.com

**USE PROPER LIGHTING.** "Modern art should be lit from the ceiling," Abecassis says, "and the light should shine directly into the center of the art." Don't light art from the side, he advises, unless it's more of an antique style of art. "If the art is shiny or sparkly, halogens would work well, because they're more reflective."





Angela Todd Designs, [www.nwinteriordesigner.com](http://www.nwinteriordesigner.com)

**REPEAT COLORS IN THE ART.** “Repeating colors from the artwork increases its impact in the room,” Abecassis says. Here, the green pillows visually strengthen the artwork. “Place your hand over just the pillows and you’ll see that the art isn’t as strong without their green accent,” says Angela Todd of Angela Todd Designs in Portland, Ore., the firm that designed the room. Three repetitions of a color is a good rule of thumb, Pangaea says, but repeat the color in different items and places in the room for balance.

**CHOOSE ART THAT FITS THE WALL.** “The number-one mistake I see is selecting art that’s not large enough for the wall,” Pangaea says. “A little painting in the middle of a huge wall gets lost.” This vertical print properly fills the wall space, and nicely complements the vertical windows.



Cesar Rubio Photography, courtesy Cary Bernstein Architect, [www.cbstudio.com](http://www.cbstudio.com)



**USE SUBTLE, EFFECTIVE COMBINATIONS.** “Mixing styles is fine,” Abecassis says. “Contemporary art can go with baroque furnishings; that’s very trendy right now.” Here, the contemporary painting blends well with the traditional chairs and décor, yet the upholstered table and curvy couch add modern splashes. The chandelier and corner sculptures share colors and shapes with the painting, subtly but effectively amplifying it.

Jerry Jacobs, [www.jerryjacobsdesign.com](http://www.jerryjacobsdesign.com)



JOHN WOLLWEERTH

**PLACE ART ACCORDING TO ITS SIZE.** “Big bold images can be enjoyed from far away and be a focal point from across a room,” Pangaea says. The bold art in the high space above this mantel can be appreciated from afar, particularly because the purple contrasts so well with the neutral walls. “Display small, detailed artwork in a location where you can get right up to it,” Pangaea says, “like intimate spaces, hallways or a wall where furniture doesn’t keep you from getting close.”



**USE FURNITURE FOR EMPHASIS.**

“Putting a bench underneath an art piece on a lone wall is like underlining a sentence; it puts more emphasis on the art,” Pangaea says. “Or put pedestals or plants on either side of the art, but it doesn’t have to be symmetrical. Placing things on the sides, underneath or around the art reinforces it as a focal point.” This painting would have looked fine on its own, but the wavy bench beneath it gives it emphasis.



**USE BALANCE AND CONTRAST.**

“Contrast makes artwork stand out,” Pangaea says. “The closer in color or shade the wall and art are, the less the art will stand out.” The neutral walls in this room make the darker-toned painting stand out, while the black couch, red pillow and red flowers echo the painting’s color balance. Additional red flourishes throughout the room strengthen that balance.

Chris Little Photography, courtesy Christy Dillard Kratzer, Dillard Pierce Design Associates, [www.dillardpercie.com](http://www.dillardpercie.com)



TEA2 Architects, [www.TEA2architects.com](http://www.TEA2architects.com)



**KEEP IT HUMAN.** “When you have really high ceilings, you can place some art very high, but it’s important to also keep some art at a human scale by placing it lower,” Pangaea says. “If everything were very high, you’d feel like the walls were looming over you.” Most people hang art too high, she adds. The center of the art should be 5 feet, 5 inches to 5 feet, 6 inches if hung on a wall with nothing beneath it. “At eye level,” Abecassis suggests.

Photos: Jeffrey Freeman, courtesy Pangaea Interior Design, [www.interior-design-portland.com](http://www.interior-design-portland.com)



### **CREATE GROUPED ARRANGEMENTS.**

If a furniture piece is topped with objects and has a painting above it, place the objects in front of the painting so that they overlap the artwork. Instead of blocking the art, objects like lamps and candleholders “create a grouped arrangement with the painting, instead of everything looking like separate floating objects that have no relationship to each other,” Pangaea says. “That’s a little interior designer’s trick!” 🏠

Jeffrey Freeman, courtesy Pangaea Interior Design, [www.interior-design-portland.com](http://www.interior-design-portland.com)



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