

Ep #20: My Golden Rules for Hanging Artwork Successfully



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Kimberly Grigg

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You're listening to episode 20 of the *Decorate Like a Design Boss* podcast. What? How did we get 20 episodes in the hopper already? Well, I am so excited and I'm brimming with ideas, tips and tricks that I want to share with you over here in my designer podcast land.

And today I am sharing my golden rules for hanging artwork. This episode is perfect for you if you wonder about how to buy and hang your artwork in just the right way. This layer in the decorating mix can be treacherous. But today I'm going to try and take away the guesswork and help you master artwork once and for all. Let's get started.

Welcome to *Decorate Like a Design Boss*, a podcast for design lovers who want to create beautiful spaces in their very own homes. My name is Kimberly Grigg and I'm a professional interior designer who teaches design lovers like yourselves how to decorate. And when I say decorate I mean decorate like a design boss. If you're ready to create a space that your family loves and your neighbors can't stop raving about well, buckle up honey because it's time to design.

Well, hello there my design lovers. I am so happy that you're here. And I'm also happy to be celebrating our 20th episode. This episode came about because I have received numerous emails asking me about how to select the right artwork for your spaces and how to hang it properly. So, thank you for your emails and keep them coming. If you have specific design questions that you would like answered, well, just DM me on our social media platforms which is @kimberlygrigdesigns.

I've also gotten the same question many times in my design career. So, I just thought it might be a great time to dive right in and see if I can help you eliminate some of the guesswork when it comes to artwork and artwork placement. Curating and selecting artwork for your home can be daunting. A lot goes into the process like aesthetics, preferences, your own design

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DNA, more about your design DNA in episodes one, two and three, frames and then the correct way to position and hang your pieces.

So, I'm going to break it down for you, and I'm going to offer you some specific guidelines that I hope will ease the process for you. These guidelines are orientated to art specifically for walls. I'm not referencing sculptures and other art objects today, but specifically art for walls. I am however including prints, mirrors, photos, originals and giclées. Basically, any art for walls is fair game in today's lesson.

So were we go. First aesthetics are important. You do want to like the artwork that goes into your home. Better yet I would like it if you would have some connection to the artwork. The style and the mood that you're trying to create in your spaces does play a role in your curation as well as your connection to the piece or pieces that you're selecting. For example, let's say you have a modern country house mixed with a touch of coastal as your style. You might choose some crusty oyster shell paintings that are framed in a driftwood type frame.

Or let's say you have a modern all white contemporary style. You might choose black and white photos framed in a sleek black frame or perhaps some abstracts that are framed in floater frames. In general, what I'm trying to say is that the style of your artwork and their frames do matter. And they need to be consistent with the style and mood of your space.

Rule number two, scale. The size of the piece or pieces should also be consistent with the size of your space. Don't hang a small painting over a sofa that sits against a very large wall. In a case like this you will either need a fairly massive piece, or you will need to use multiples to take up and fill that space. In general, if you're hanging artwork over a piece of furniture, then you will want it to take up about two-thirds of the width of that piece of furniture. Getting the scale wrong will throw the entire room off, so make sure that you do this correctly.

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Most people when making this mistake will actually get the piece too small typically. But a word of caution, the piece should never go past the edge of the furniture that it is placed over.

Just some other general tips for hanging artwork over furniture pieces that I find myself repeating because, well, they've been successful. First, I like to use multiples as in three pieces over a sofa. That is if your sofa must sit against a wall. I also love using a mirror over a buffet. I sometimes will flank it with four prints if the wall and the buffet piece are large enough. I often hang three pieces over a king size bed, and one architectural piece over queen size beds.

If I am using a TV out in the open I often will relieve the eye a bit by placing three architectural objects over to one side and top corner of the TV especially if the wall that the TV is hanging on is rather large. I typically don't hang artwork way up high over doors and etc. as you really can't see the subject. I have used artwork over beds as long as the subject is strong enough to be seen while standing on the floor.

Rule number three, height. Hang your artwork at the proper height by hanging it where the center point of the piece is at eye level. You want the artwork to be connected to the room, to the viewer and to the pieces of furniture that occupy the room. Most people hang their artwork too high. You should be looking dead ahead at the artwork, not looking up or down to view the artwork properly.

If you are hanging a piece over furniture, the bottom of the artwork should be about four to seven inches above the top of the piece of furniture. I adjust this from time to time depending also on the accessories that I might be placing on the furniture. For example, if I have a 30 inch tall table and then place a 14 inch tall box on that piece of furniture then most likely I will hang the artwork four inches above the top of the box.

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Rule number four, frame choice matters. You want to keep your framing consistent with the style of your home, not necessarily the style of your art. I have a favorite framer in my area, we've been friends for years and we have had many a debate about framing art. His business is framing, so of course he tends to want to frame in terms of the artwork itself. I however really tend to frame artwork to go with the style of the home. I have taught many a customer of his that trying to frame their artwork in his shop to consider the room, not just the art.

In fact, once I was standing in his shop trying to mind my own business while one of his customers asked him his opinion on framing a particular piece of art. There was a little blue in the artwork and the framer kept putting a blue matte on the piece. Finally, I just couldn't help myself and I butted in or blurted out I suppose. I asked the customer to describe the room to me. She described it as clean lined, all white, and very minimal. The piece of art was an abstract print.

After I begged forgiveness from the framer and asked her if I could offer her my professional opinion, she ended up with a gold fillet white matte and a clean line gold frame. I felt really guilty afterwards and even took a dozen cookies to the framer as an apology for giving my two cents when it wasn't actually asked for. He said, "Did she call you?" And I said, "Huh?". He said, "She came back later on in the day and asked for your contact information."

I was very surprised. But sure enough she called me several days later and she is now one of my favorite clients, and I am here to tell you. While that blue matte looked great with the artwork, well, that is if you like colored mattes but it would have been a disaster in her house. And just so you know, the framer and I are still friends and I do admire and respect his work. Hence, he's my favorite framer in the area. But, I do stand strong on the fact that your artwork frames should also go with your style and mood of your home.

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Rule number five, you don't always have to hang art, you can lean it. One of my favorite decorating techniques is to hang a large mirror over a piece of furniture and then lean a smaller but appropriately sized painting in front of it over to the size as an accessory. Remember your rule of scale here, and if the mirror is rather large, don't lean an itty bitty painting in front of it or vice versa. Leaning artwork creates a relaxed and more casual feeling. And it's a good way to soften a stiff space.

Rule number six, use the proper mechanics and hardware for hanging. Just know that most people underestimate the weight of their artwork. Hold your artwork and get on your bathroom scale and do a little math for a closer to accurate weight of your artwork. Then know for sure that if you're using stick on hooks, well they just aren't that reliable. I know that sometimes they're necessary/ But many a good artwork piece has been ruined by falling off of the wall using this method of hanging. If you are using stick on hooks, remember to go up in your weight.

I like to personally use wall anchors and monkey hooks to hang artwork. I find them to be more reliable. Monkey hooks are new and fresh and they do offer an alternative to hanging pieces. However, they are very hard to get out of the wall. Good old fashioned anchors will always do the trick as will weighted hooks and a good old hammer. If you have difficulty hanging your artwork, well then schedule a professional picture hanger, it really helps and you can be sure that your artwork will stay securely in place.

Rule number seven, placement matters. This is the number one thing that I see novice decorators do that will interfere with the success of the placement of their artwork. Far greater than the subject, the frame and even the hanging of the art is the incorrect placement of the art. You want to create a balance in the space by mixing up the numbers of pieces and by mixing up the types of different art.

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For example, don't hang a single painting on each of the four walls, include a painting or two, prints, a mirror, or something that is more like an object or an architectural embellishment in your mix within that space. Next you will want to vary the number. If you use a large painting on one wall then your next art wall should contain multiples, perhaps two prints, or four architectural objects. I recently went to a client's home and we started the project in his dining room. He was trying to blend his antique dining table into a coastal setting successfully.

After adding linen slip covered chairs, I was able to up-level the space by removing his placement of art. He had placed a single painting on each of three walls and one single print on another. Here is what I did to mix it up and pull it all together. I created a focal point over the buffet by adding a traditional mirror. On the second wall I added a large traditional style painting. On the third wall I grouped four abstract prints. I had the prints framed in a soft silver frame to go with the coastal vibe and the abstracts actually created a nice juxtaposition to the antique and balanced the style, the result was lovely and harmonious.

You don't have to add art to every wall but you can. And if you do then you will need to vary the type of art used and the numbers of pieces that you use from wall to wall. Consider this also when you're decorating your home as a whole.

I recently ran into this situation in a very large home that we're designing. It seemed that we were hanging one abstract painting after another throughout the home. Something was off and something felt odd to me. After contemplating a bit, I decided that it was too many, what I call onesies, and too many paintings. I edited and removed several of the paintings and I broke everything up a bit. I then added a gallery wall in one of the spaces that include framed posters, mini paintings, prints and architectural objects.

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This made the spaces blend harmoniously and feel balanced. It also helped the home to feel more like a home than an art gallery.

So, what can we learn from today's lesson? Don't let hanging artwork intimidate you. There are a few golden rules that you will need to follow. But art work is one of the most important layers in the decorating mix. Don't be afraid to experiment. Now that you have some guidelines you'll be creating successful wall scapes in no time.

Remember these tips, marry your artwork to your style and the mood of the space. Get the scale right. Hang it the right height. Frame choice does matter. Consider leaning artwork. Use the proper hardware to hang your art or hire a pro. And finally, mix it up by varying the types and numbers of pieces of artwork used from wall to wall.

I can't wait to see what you create, please share it with me and let us know how we are doing over here on our podcast. I would love it if you would subscribe, which is now called follow, rate and review this podcast which also helps get our message out to others who might benefit from our work here.

So, thanks for tuning in and as I like to say, don't wait, today is a great day to decorate. Bye for now.

Thanks for listening to *Decorate Like a Design Boss*, if you want more info on how to decorate your space like a pro, visit kimberlygriggdesigns.com. See you next week.