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The Artful Home

How to get started loving, collecting
and living with art

Art adds vitality, beauty and soul to a home. But a compelling art collection is an investment in time, energy and understanding – and getting started can be daunting. There are countless artists, styles, genres, media and display options available to the budding art collector.

Armed with a few tips, you'll find that diving in can be inspiring, provocative and, most of all, fun. ►

by Christina Symons

Buy for love

Jennifer Johnson is a Vancouver-based art dealer, art consultant and career coach for artists, as well as a passionate supporter of the arts. She connects collectors with artists, starting with a simple assessment to note a collector's areas of interest, aesthetic taste and budget requirements. With these parameters in place, Johnson's go-to advice is precise: "Buy what you love," Johnson says. "You are the one who will be living with and looking at the art every day, so ask yourself how you want to feel when you look at the art. Some people want to feel uplifted. For others, for instance, it's to be reminded of a wonderful moment in time."

Get in the know

Learn about art by becoming a member of local galleries, such as the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, or joining societies such as the Vancouver Art Gallery Associates or the Contemporary Art Society of Vancouver. Subscribe to art magazines and pick up free catalogues and gallery directories. Attend gallery openings and shows, as well as local studio tours and art school grad shows. You can also work with a consultant such as Johnson, or an interior designer or architect. "All of these avenues provide a new collector with access to a whole world of art, and multiple ways to learn about and buy art," says Johnson. "This can be overwhelming, so have patience, be curious and ask a lot of questions."



Don't hang too high.

(left) Typically, you want art at eye level, 145–150 cm from the floor to the centre of the piece. But you can get creative with placement, too. For instance, try hanging pieces lower next to seating areas.

Consider the light.

(below) Look for bright, natural, light—but avoid hanging unprotected drawings or paintings in direct sunlight. If you add lighting, go for soft, indirect, light from colour-corrected bulbs.



Set a budget

You don't have to be wealthy to buy art. But like any investment, it helps to set a budget and then seek out work that fits within it. "Original art does not have to be expensive," says Johnson. "Look hard enough and you will find something you love, in your price range."

Established BC painter Tom Carter, who works with Johnson, offers limited-edition prints as a budget-friendly option for some clients but says new collectors would be better off seeking out original works that fit within their budget, such as drawings and smaller-size paintings. Prints will hold their value but likely won't appreciate the way an original work would. "Originals have a soul and real value," he says.

Shop local

British Columbia is a hotbed of emerging and established artists of world-class calibre. As a collector you'll contribute to art culture directly by seeking out local sources.

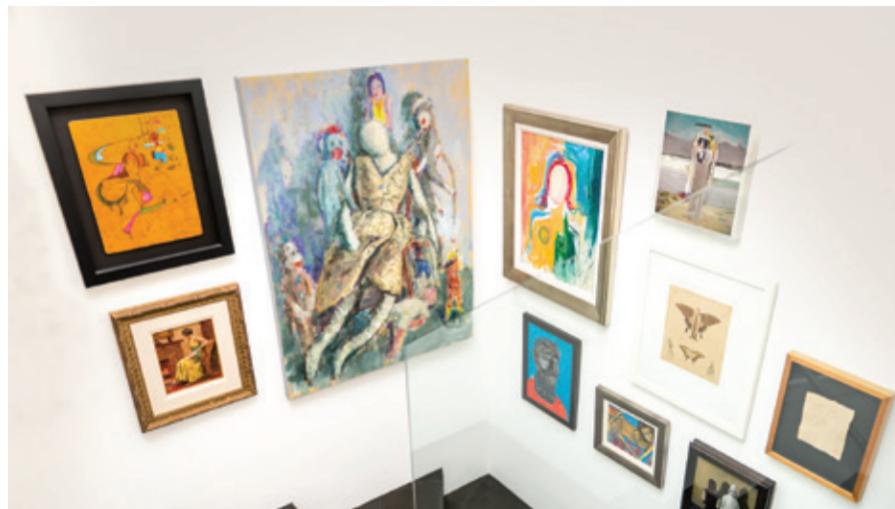
"There is a plethora of artistic talent in BC and they need our support," says Johnson. For instance? She points to acclaimed local artists such as Vancouver-based photographer and surrealist Dina Goldstein, painters Karen Yurkovich and Pilar Mehli, gem carver and sculptor Robert Chaplin and painter and mixed-media artist Christian Nicolay.

Go big.

(above) A large work with pride of place in a room – and no competing clutter – looks stunning.

Create a gallery wall.

(right) Use a grid pattern or try hanging "salon style," working out from the middle and combining works of different sizes and media.





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INSURING YOUR COLLECTION

Rick Dhesa of BCAA Insurance offers these tips for budding collectors to ensure their art is properly insured:

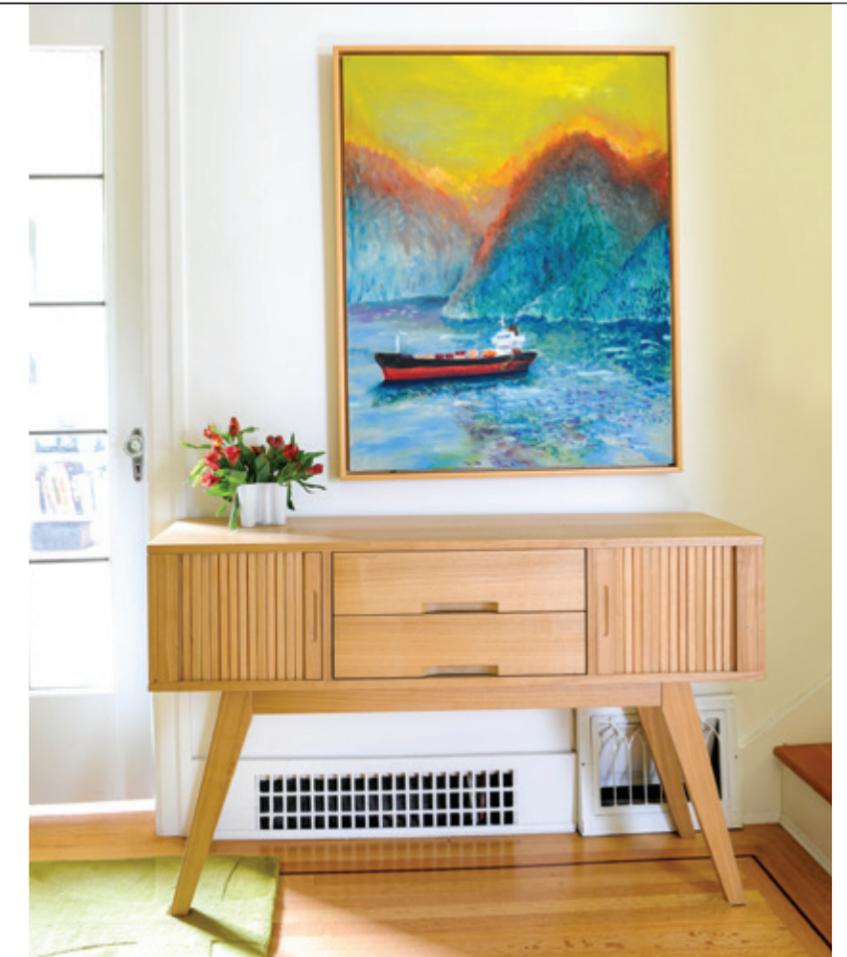
- Get valuable items appraised to help determine the appropriate coverage.
- Keep photos of all your artworks in a secure location to help with the claims process if they're lost.
- If you're planning to exhibit art offsite, ask about your policy's limitations, as exclusions may apply.
- Make sure your home has adequate security to protect your pieces.
- Read your policy's fine print. It may limit coverage if the "history or rarity" of an item contributes significantly to its value.

For more on insuring art and other valuable items, visit: bcaa.com/insurance

Go to the source

You can purchase art through galleries, or from artists directly. You may be able to arrange payment plans or small discounts for repeat or multiple purchases. But whenever possible, take the time to meet artists and visit their working spaces or studios. You'll be rewarded by a deeper connection to the artwork and the artist.

"I love taking collectors to artists' studios and watching their reaction," says Johnson.



"Sometimes the artwork brings people to tears or laughter, or a combination of both." She adds she especially likes clients to meet artists in person, to establish lasting relationships.

Art everywhere

When it comes to displaying your art, Johnson contends there are no hard and fast rules – true art lovers put art everywhere. You can ask an artist to help hang their work, or galleries will often include installation as part of the purchase. Or, you can hire a professional art installer or interior designer to assist.

"It depends on the style of home, the lighting and the owner's persona," Johnson notes. "Every wall can support art, sometimes even leaning on the floor, or on easels, when there's no more wall space."

Some collectors even have prints on the ceiling, she says. "Just make sure they're fastened securely so they won't fall down." ■

Don't be afraid to mingle styles.

A classical painting can pair well with modern art and decor, and vice versa. To tie it all together, try picking a colour, shape or theme that carries through objects and artworks with different aesthetics.



The Art of Decor



Brent Boechler that's dense, abstract and loaded with layers of brushed, peeled colour.

Do you match art colours to furniture?

No, but there are lucky harmonizing touches. For example, three cast pigment-polymer-resin pieces by North Vancouver artist Tom Burrows were chosen to introduce jewel tones to the living room's black and grey decor – including amethyst. The rug in the room just happened to have a hint of amethyst. In the media room, we chose a turquoise art-piece coffee table made from recycled wood palettes. Because of the homeowner's passion for boxing, we also selected two Mike Tyson portraits by painter David T. Cho for that room. Both have turquoise streaks that work well with the table.

What advice do you give new collectors?

I encourage people never to buy art for investment, but only because they love it. To gain this appreciation, and sway them from immediately deciding what would "go with their decor," we flip through magazines and examine wall spaces. In this way, they can see what other people have chosen for their homes; for instance, balancing antiques with modern paintings. This gives them confidence to consider a variety of styles. ■

Vibrant artworks bring a reno to life

BY CAROL CRENNNA

When a South Surrey homeowner hired interior designer Adam Becker to work on a newly updated and expanded 1950s A-frame house, Adam recommended his mother, long-time art consultant Diana Becker, to direct the selection and placement of art. She talks about the process here.

When and how did you begin the art sourcing process?

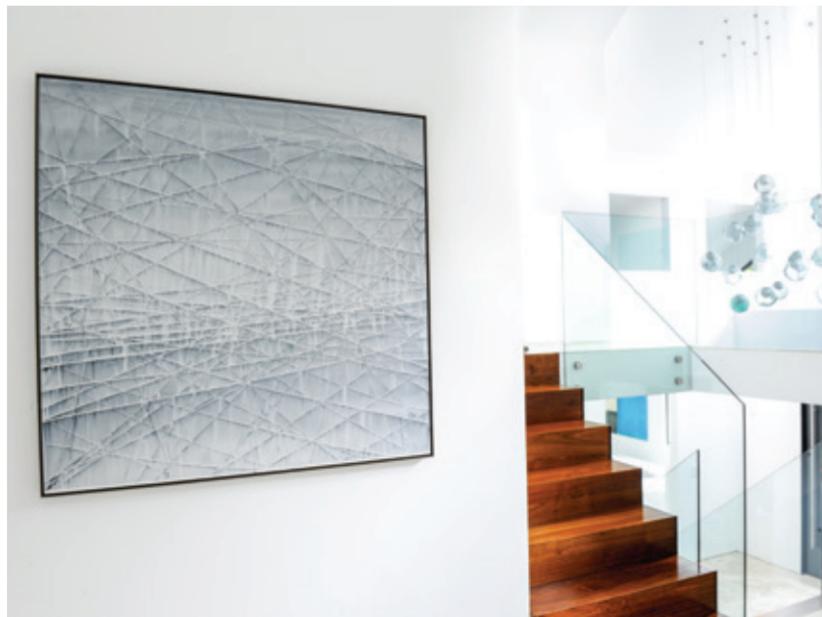
After the selection of the home's furnishing and finishes, art was the natural next step. Contemporary furniture from Inform and LivingSpace Interiors, set against gallery-white walls, created a blank canvas for art.

What criteria were used for choosing the pieces?

The homeowner had set budgets for renovations, furniture and art. This is very helpful. Since I suggest not choosing too many pieces, we spent \$7,000 to \$10,000 per piece. He wanted to support emerging and newly established artists; the galleries I prefer to buy from support locals.

How did you display the art?

I considered what was specifically required for each room. For example, a huge foyer that needed a focal point now has a black metal mesh piece by sculptor David Bebgie that casts a reflection when lit in evening. Its airy detail is perfect juxtaposed against an acrylic panel by Vancouver artist



A media room wall displays a collage of Mike Grill photographs framed in white, except for one in focal-point red.

(top, left to right) Playful pop-art lettering in a painting by Bratsa Bonifacho draws guests into the home's lower-level entrance; a colourful abstract adds a burst of colour in the kitchen; a cast pigment-polymer-resin piece by North Vancouver artist Tom Burrows fits perfectly with the architectural details of the living room; (left) a dramatic painting in the foyer plays off the lines of a floating mahogany staircase.

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