Pictures contribute more to home decoration than most accessories. Ash trays come and go, vases are put away after a few days of service, but pictures and other wall hangings, like lamps, remain continuously in a room. They complete a room by coordinating and unifying it. They help establish a mood or theme for a room while introducing pleasing variations in line, color, and mass. They add beauty. They create interest to a room through their story, beauty of line, or color pattern.

Somehow, pictures, paintings, prints, photographs, needlepoint, decorative plates, planters, scrolls, plaques, and almost anything you can place on a wall are neglected or treated in a half-hearted manner in the average home. Many feel they know little about pictures and less about framing and hanging them. This may be true, but it doesn’t matter. Your home isn’t judged by professionals or by museum standards of art. Over and above comfort and utility, you are your own creator and judge.

In picking pictures for your home, there is no good rule on how much money you should spend. Good names come high when they are signed to an oil or watercolor. Good prints, however, are reasonable. Thrift shops and some galleries often have canvasses that you can clean and frame reasonably.

If you are to enjoy your pictures, you must use care in choosing, framing, and arranging them. Here are some tips.
Select Pictures You Like

People's tastes differ, so choose the type of picture you and your family like. A picture should give you enjoyment to merit a place on your walls. This is about the only consistent rule you can apply in selecting pictures or any wall hanging: choose what you like and would enjoy looking at for a long time. Many types of modern art neither reproduce a recognizable scene nor tell a story. For the average viewer, the only clue to their merit is the emotional impact it has. You either like it or you don't. In the latter case avoid it.

Select Pictures for Particular Rooms

Consider the picture's subject in relation to the room for which you want it. Some pictures are better in a particular room, such as a bedroom, den, family room, living room, or kitchen. Some people prefer using personal photographs or large portraits only in their bedroom. Remember you are more interested in family photographs than are your visitors, so why not put them in the bedroom?

Spirited room, such as game or family rooms, require spirited pictures. A handsome poster of bright fire engines, for instance, brilliant in color and swift in action, would be suitable for "play rooms." Dancing girls are for bedroom corners where a frill is needed. Horses, dogs, and hunting scenes are masculine and, incidentally, nearly always over-used and over-stated.

Children's rooms can display highly colored posters and colorful maps. Or, it may be fun to use finger paintings and crayon sketches fresh from the school easel where they were created. Teenagers are best left to their own liking. Their changing moods from week to week will determine what goes on their walls. Bulletin boards may be used effectively in their rooms where they can display their swords, airplanes, collegiate pennants, movie idols, and what-nots.

Bulletin boards may be used effectively in kitchens, dens, halls, as well as children's rooms. They offer opportunities for changing the items placed on display. Many bright colors and personal items can make this arrangement very interesting. A large bulletin board is a good place to put family snapshots and photographs.
Select Pictures to Fit Your Furnishings

Pictures of Hawaiian scenes and sketches of Hawaiian flowers "go together" with koa, mahogany, or rattan furniture, lauhala mats, and bamboo draperies. Japanese scrolls and prints are a part of the Oriental decor. By the accessories to your furniture, your room can be made to dip into the past or project into the future.

Resist the impulse to buy a picture or a wall hanging just because it is pretty. This kind of buying is real extravagance. You will not be happy unless the item fits the style and color pattern of your room.

When you select a picture consider the type and colors of the room for which you want it. Your pictures will give a room a greater feeling of unity if they carry out the style of other furnishings in the room. If some of your room furnishings repeat the colors in the picture it helps them "go together." Sometimes the color scheme of a room is built around the colors in a picture.

Use brightly colored pictures on neutral walls (gray, tan, natural, grayed colors). Black and white prints or pictures look better on walls which are a clear or strong color.

Select Pictures in Proper Proportion

Pictures and wall hangings should be chosen so they are in proportion to the furnishings they beautify, and to the room as a whole. This does not mean that all pictures should be of the same size. It does mean that all picture-groups should be related to the size of the furniture near them.

Arrange pictures or wall hangings to emphasize their beauty. They are chosen because their beauty, even if only to you. Give that beauty a chance to be seen and at the same time, avoid giving your home a cluttered look. The small piece used with several others loses its identity. One picture or wall decoration in good proportion to its surroundings will be seen and enjoyed.

A grouping of objects is seen as a whole, without emphasis on any one piece, so a collection should have a composite meaning, with subject matters related to each other.
Select Other Wall Accessories

There are other things to use on a wall besides pictures. Avoid the monotony of too similar shapes by being imaginative with other objects. For example, the dining area of a modern kitchen might have a row of gay-shaped plates. A pair of decorative trays or apothecary scales might be hung on the wall. Filled with fruit or green, growing plants, planters give a feeling of life as well as beauty. Other effective decorations are mirrors, textiles, maps, scrolls, and shadow boxes.

Summary

Probably it's been a long time since you really looked at the pictures on your walls, to decide whether or not they add to or detract from the general appearance of the room. Try asking yourself the following questions:

1. Do you enjoy the pictures you are using, or are they just something on the wall?
2. Are there too many pictures in one room, giving it a cluttered effect?
3. Do your pictures carry out the character of the room?
4. Are your pictures harmonious with the color scheme of your room?
5. Do you have boldly patterned walls? Are pictures needed on these walls?
6. Where have you placed family photographs in your rooms?
7. Are the size of the pictures in proportion to both the wall space and the furniture above which they're hung?
8. Does any picture in your home seem to be a spot by itself on a wall, or does it "tie up" with a group of furnishings?
9. Have you selected special pictures for your children?

Remember that the pictures and wall hangings you use in your home are a reflection of your taste. It might be worthwhile for you to save your money and try to get one really good picture or wall hanging—one that gives you inspiration by its mood, spirit, and theme, as well as offers a note of color to your room.
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