

formfield

The Collector's Guide to Choosing Art for Your Space

A practical guide to selecting, sizing, and displaying
fine art photography in your home

Before You Buy a Single Print

Choosing art for your home is one of those things that feels like it should be intuitive. You see something you love, you put it on the wall, done.

In practice, it's rarely that simple. The piece that looked extraordinary in a gallery feels lost above your sofa. The print you ordered online arrives and the colours clash with everything in the room. The size that seemed right on screen turns out to be far too small or overwhelmingly large.



Most people end up with bare walls not because they don't care about art, but because they're afraid of getting it wrong. The cost, the commitment, the nagging feeling that they don't know enough to choose well.

This guide is here to change that.

Over the following pages, we'll walk through the practical decisions that make the difference between art that transforms a room and art that never quite works. No jargon. No pretension. Just honest, useful guidance drawn from years of creating and printing fine art photography.

By the end, you'll know how to choose with confidence and enjoy the process.

Start with the Room, Not the Art

The most common mistake people make is falling in love with a piece first and then trying to find a wall for it. It can work, but more often it leads to frustration. A better approach: start with the space you want to fill.

STAND IN THE ROOM AND ASK YOURSELF:

What's the mood of this room?

Is it a space for energy or calm? A living room where people gather, or a hallway you pass through twice a day? The art you choose should support that mood, not fight against it.

What are the dominant colours and tones?

You don't need to match art to your sofa — that's a common misconception. But you do need the tones to sit comfortably together. Warm-toned spaces work beautifully with warm-toned photography. Cooler rooms pair naturally with cooler palettes.

How much visual weight can the wall handle?

A large, blank wall above a fireplace is calling out for a statement piece. A busy room with patterned furnishings needs simpler, quieter art. A minimal room can handle something bold.



Let the room tell you what it needs before you start browsing.

SIZE

Size Matters More Than You Think

Getting the size right is probably the single most important decision you'll make. It's also where most people go wrong — almost always by choosing too small.

Above a sofa or bed

The art should be roughly two-thirds to three-quarters the width of the furniture beneath it. If your sofa is 200cm wide, aim for a print that spans 130–150cm.

On a large empty wall

Go bigger than you think. An A4 print on a 3-metre wall will look like an afterthought. This is where A1 or larger prints come into their own.

In a hallway or narrow space

Portrait-orientation prints work well here. An A2 or A3 piece at eye level can turn a forgotten passage into a moment of pause.

Practical trick: *Cut a piece of paper to the exact dimensions of the print you're considering and hold it against the wall. Step back and look from where you'd normally sit. You'll know immediately if the scale is right.*

Go bigger than you think.

SIZES AT A GLANCE

A4 21 x 30 CM

Intimate spaces, desks, shelves, small groupings

A3 30 x 42 CM

Hallways, bathrooms, smaller feature walls, gallery walls

A2 42 x 59 CM

Medium walls, above desks, bedrooms, paired displays

A1 59 x 84 CM

Statement walls, above sofas, dining rooms, large spaces

Choosing What Speaks to You

Here's the part where we'd love to give you a formula. Choose landscapes for living rooms, architecture for offices, abstracts for bedrooms. But it doesn't work like that. And anyone who tells you otherwise is oversimplifying.

The art that works best in your home is art that you genuinely respond to.

Not what's trending on Pinterest. Not what an interior designer would choose for a magazine shoot. The piece that makes you stop and look – that's the one.

That said, a few honest observations worth sharing:

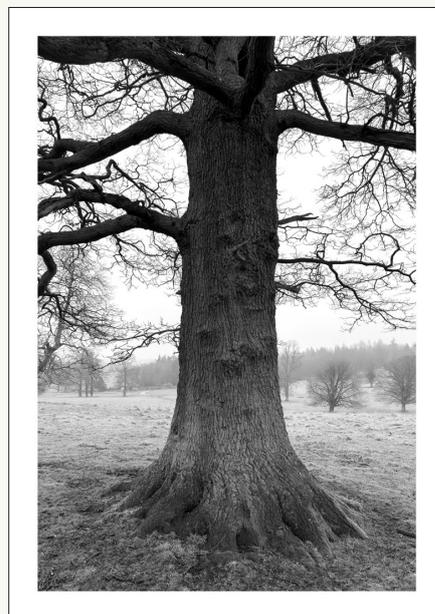
Landscape photography

Enduringly popular for a reason. It brings a sense of space, calm, and natural beauty into rooms that might otherwise feel enclosed. Desert landscapes with their warm tones and graphic simplicity work particularly well in contemporary interiors.



Architectural photography

Tends to suit more structured, modern spaces. The geometric lines echo the lines of the room itself. A strong choice for offices, hallways, and minimalist interiors.



Black and white photography

Remarkably versatile. It works in virtually any colour scheme because it doesn't compete with the room's palette. If you're unsure about colour matching, monochrome is a confident, timeless choice.

The emotional test: Pay attention to the pieces that make you pause longest. Not the ones you think you should like, but the ones you keep coming back to. That instinct is worth trusting.

Working with Colour and Tone

You've probably heard two contradictory pieces of advice: "match your art to your room" and "art should be a statement that stands apart." Both are partially right. The key is harmony, not matching.



Warm rooms, warm art

Natural wood, warm whites, beige, terracotta, or earth tones pair beautifully with golden-hour landscapes, desert scenes, and warm-toned architecture.



Cool rooms, cool art

Grey, blue, white, or cool-toned neutrals pair well with overcast seascapes, shaded forests, monochrome work, and blue-hour scenes.



Neutral rooms are your canvas

Predominantly white, grey, or neutral spaces offer the most freedom. Bold colour in the art can serve as the focal point the room needs.

A note on contrast

Sometimes the most effective choice is deliberate contrast. A warm, earthy desert photograph in an otherwise cool, minimal room becomes the focal point as it draws the eye precisely because it doesn't blend in. This works best when it's intentional and when the rest of the room is restrained enough to let the art breathe.

Practical tip: Pull up the image on your phone or tablet and hold it against the wall in the room. It's not perfect, but it gives you a surprisingly useful sense of how the colours will interact with the space.

Hanging and Placement

You've chosen the piece. It's arrived. Now: where exactly does it go?

The eye-level rule

The centre of the artwork should sit at approximately 145–150cm from the floor. This is gallery standard and it works in most domestic settings too. It means the art sits at a natural, comfortable viewing height whether you're standing or seated nearby.

Above furniture, adjust down

When hanging art above a sofa, bed, or console, bring it closer to the furniture — roughly 15–25cm above the top edge. Too much gap between the furniture and the art makes them feel disconnected, like they're in separate conversations.

Centring matters

Centre the art over the furniture, not over the wall. If your sofa is off-centre on a wall, the print should be centred above the sofa, not the wall. This anchors the art to the furniture arrangement.

Multiple pieces

Keep the gap between them consistent — 5–8cm is usually right. Too far apart and they stop reading as a group. Too close and they feel cramped.

Lighting makes the difference

Art without decent lighting is art half-seen. Position a picture light above the print, or ensure a lamp casts light towards it. Avoid direct sunlight — even archival prints benefit from being kept out of sustained UV exposure.

QUICK REFERENCE

Centre height

145–150cm from floor

Above furniture

15–25cm gap

Between prints

5–8cm spacing

Centre over

Furniture, not wall

Framing and Presentation

How you frame a print has as much impact on the final result as the print itself. A beautiful photograph in a cheap frame is diminished. A well-framed print elevates the entire room.



Glass and glazing: Always specify UV-protective glazing. Museum glass (anti-reflective, UV-filtering) is the premium option — it virtually eliminates glare and provides maximum protection.

Our recommendation: Take your print to a professional framer. For Formfield prints, that's Hahnemühle Photo Rag 308gsm, a 100% cotton rag paper. Ask for acid-free mounting materials throughout.

Simple, clean profiles

Black, white, or natural wood are the safest and most versatile choice. They let the photograph speak without the frame competing. Thin profiles (2–3cm) suit smaller prints; slightly wider profiles (3–5cm) give larger prints the visual weight they need.

Floating frames

Where the print appears to hover within the frame with a visible gap around the edges — creating a contemporary, gallery feel. They work particularly well with fine art photography on heavier papers.

No frame at all

Unframed prints pinned or mounted directly to the wall have an artist's-studio quality that suits relaxed, creative spaces. Ensure the print is mounted on archival board to prevent buckling.

Mounts and mats

A mount adds breathing room and draws the eye inward. White or off-white are classic. Wider mounts look more generous and gallery-appropriate, while narrow mounts feel more modern and graphic.

Building a Collection Over Time

You don't need to fill every wall at once. In fact, the best collections are built gradually, one piece at a time, as you discover what resonates with you.

Start with one strong piece

Choose the wall that matters most to you — the one you see every day, the one guests notice first — and find the right print for that space. Live with it. Notice how it changes the room. That single piece will teach you more about your taste than hours of browsing ever could.

Let a theme emerge naturally

Some collectors are drawn to a particular landscape or geography. Others gravitate towards a tonal palette — all warm earth tones, or all monochromes. Some collect by mood rather than subject. There's no right approach, but over time you'll notice a thread running through your choices. Follow it.

Mix sizes and orientations

A collection of identically sized prints in a row can feel rigid. Varying the scale — a large statement piece alongside smaller, more intimate works — creates visual rhythm and keeps things interesting.

Don't rush to fill space

Empty wall space isn't a problem to solve — it's breathing room that makes the art you do have feel more intentional.

A single, well-chosen print on an otherwise empty wall is infinitely more effective than three mediocre pieces hung to fill a gap.

The value of limited editions: *When you buy limited edition prints, you're acquiring something with a defined scarcity. The work retains its distinctiveness — you won't see the same print mass-produced in every home décor shop.*

Caring for Your Prints

Fine art prints made with archival materials are built to last generations. A little care ensures they stay that way.

Display

Keep prints out of sustained direct sunlight. Even archival pigment inks rated for 200+ years will benefit from being displayed away from windows where sun falls directly on the print for hours each day. UV-protective glazing adds a valuable layer of defence.

Humidity

Avoid hanging fine art prints in bathrooms or anywhere with consistently high humidity. Cotton rag paper is wonderfully stable, but prolonged moisture exposure isn't kind to any paper product.

Handling

When unframed, handle prints by the edges or wear clean cotton gloves. Natural oils from fingers can mark the paper surface over time.

Cleaning

For framed prints behind glass, clean the glass with a soft cloth — never spray cleaner directly onto the glass, as liquid can seep behind the glazing. For unframed prints, a very soft, dry brush can remove surface dust.

Storage: *If you need to store a print temporarily, keep it flat in acid-free tissue paper, in a cool, dry place away from direct light. Avoid rolling if possible — flat storage is always preferable for long-term preservation.*

Not All Prints Are Created Equal

A final thought worth sharing, because it's something we feel strongly about.

The market for photography prints has exploded in recent years, and most of what's available is produced by print-on-demand services using standard inkjet printers and commodity paper. The prints look acceptable in product photos but lack the depth, tonal range, and longevity of properly produced fine art prints.

The difference is in the materials and the process.

Paper matters

Museum-quality cotton rag paper (like the Hahnemühle Photo Rag we use — 308gsm, 100% cotton, acid-free) has a depth and tactile quality that coated photo paper simply cannot replicate. It holds ink differently, reveals finer tonal gradations, and feels substantial in your hands.

Ink matters

Archival pigment inks (as opposed to dye-based inks) are rated for over 200 years of colour fidelity. They produce richer blacks, smoother gradients, and colours that don't shift or fade over time.

Control matters

When prints are produced in-house rather than outsourced to a lab, every aspect of the process — colour calibration, paper handling, ink density, quality inspection — is under the artist's direct control. The print you receive is the print they intended.



When you invest in a print for your home, these details are what separate a piece of art from a poster.

ABOUT

formfield

Formfield is a fine art photography studio specialising in limited edition prints, produced in-house on museum-quality materials.

Our collections span desert landscapes, coastal scenes, mountain and valley photography, architecture, and woodland environments — each image carefully curated and printed using archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Photo Rag 308gsm cotton rag paper.

Every print is made to order on our large format printer, inspected by hand, and shipped with care. Larger formats (A2 and A1) are limited to editions of 100 and come with a signed certificate of authenticity.

We believe in fewer prints, made better.

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