

Ten Things to Consider Before You Buy Art



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Choosing art should not be an overwhelming process but it can be for many people. If you've ever been in an art gallery or visited an outdoor art show, you are surrounded with a myriad of colors, subject matters and styles. How can you possibly make a decision?

Maybe you already have your eye on something you fancy but you are struggling with making a decision. Maybe you have never purchased art in your life.

As an artist, I have come to realize that people purchase art for different reasons. Recently a friend of mine lost her husband and she was downsizing to a new home. This included going through the painful process of sorting through his things. As she prepared to move into her new, smaller place, she was literally facing empty walls, a literal blank canvas. Her smaller house meant less wall space so she chose art for her home carefully. I was honored when she purchased a brightly painted original rooster painting of mine.

Another customer who purchased a large, original somewhat abstract painting of mine in a local gallery, told me it had a cave-man feel to it. I had purposely avoided realism when making the artwork so the figures were a bit primitive. What exactly was it about the free running wild horses that resonated with him?

My guess is that when he looked at it he felt a sense of freedom (a virtual running with the horses) that might have been a bit primal.

People buy art for a variety of reasons but deep at the heart of why they purchase is usually (not always) an emotional connection they feel for a piece.

I developed this brief guide to help aid you with art purchasing decisions. I hope it assists you in choosing art that is right for you.

Cordially,

Teena Stewart

Artist

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1) **What feeling does the artwork ignite in you?**

Does it make you feel happy, nostalgic, tranquil, etc. Would you be okay feeling that way every time you look at the artwork after you bring it home?

2) **Will it go with your décor?**

If the artwork has bright, cheerful colors, will it fit well with the color scheme in the room you have in mind?

3) **Do you have a place to put it?**

Some people know exactly where they want to hang a piece of artwork before they buy it, others work it out when they get it home. It's wise to consider where it will work best *before* you buy it. You don't want to bring it home only to find it's too large, not large enough or just doesn't look right in the room.

4) **What do you know about the artist?**

Familiarizing yourself with the artist can help you appreciate his/her art more because it can deepen your understanding of what the artist went through before creating the work. It can also make you aware of the materials used and the techniques that went into making the art.

That might also include the reason the artist made it in the first place. If you are at a gallery and the artist is present, ask for some background. If the artist isn't present, ask the gallery manager or assistant for a bio. They usually have them on hand. If you are shopping online, you can find out more about the artist via the About Page on his/her website.

5) **What is the story behind the artwork?**

Knowing the deeper meaning, the artist's "why" for creating the artwork, can make it even more meaningful to you.

6) **Is it part of a series?**

Artwork doesn't necessarily have to be a part of a series, but knowing this may give you the option to purchase other art in the series that helps fill the room you are working on.

7) **Does the artist ship?**

If he/she does, then you don't need to worry about carrying it with you or fitting it into your luggage if you are traveling.

8) **Does the artwork require special care?**

Watercolors can be susceptible to moisture damage even when framed. Hanging a watercolor in a bathroom might not be the best choice.

A colored pencil drawing on black paper probably shouldn't be hung in direct sunlight to prevent fading.

If you have any concerns about the artwork you are considering, it's best to ask about special care concerns.

9) **Does the artist's work have value?**

Artists who have achieved a certain level of fame may ask more for their work due to the demand for it. A lesser known artist's work, however, may increase in value as the demand for the artist's work grows. Also, value isn't necessarily monetary.

Artwork also has emotional value. How much does the artwork mean to you on a personal level? Art is also something that can be handed down to love ones and become a cherished legacy.

Years ago we inherited a watercolor sepia-toned painting of an old sea captain. The work is well-rendered and has been apart of our lives for years. Each time we moved, the somber sea captain was given a prominent place in our family room or living room.

Further research on the painting told us the artist, Portia Parks Cain, was born in 1879 and died in 1920. We learned that she was married to Frank Cain who was my husband, Jeff's grandmother's youngest sister. We couldn't find any other information on her. Though very skilled, she was most likely a dilettante, someone who just dabbled in painting and not necessarily a professional artist. From a monetary standpoint, the painting wasn't all that valuable.

As we started considering downsizing, we asked our grown kids (two out of three) lived out of the country, if any of them wanted it. I was surprised by their answer. Each one said they wouldn't mind having it. It was important to them to keep it in the family. We told them we would hold onto the artwork and they could settle things between themselves later when the time came.

The emotional and historical value made the painting much more valuable to our family. It's a family heirloom. You can't put a price on that.

10) Do You Love the Art?

Don't just buy it because someone told you to or because it's kind of okay and you need something to hang on the walls. You should love, not like the art.

Buy it because it makes you smile, it soothes you, you can't stop thinking about it, or you can't live without it.

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