

# LAGUNA BEACH

Magazine

JUNE 2018 » LAGUNABEACHMAGAZINE.COM



ARTS SPECIAL SECTION

## UNDER THE SUN

PAGEANT OF THE MASTERS CELEBRATES IMPRESSIONISTS AND PLEIN-AIR PAINTERS

CLASSICS AND  
CONTEMPORARIES

A SPOTLIGHT ON LONGTIME  
AND NEW FESTIVAL ARTISTS

ARTFUL ABODES

MAKING A PLACE FOR  
MASTERPIECES AT HOME



# The ART of DESIGN

Interior designers, artists and dealers share their tips for incorporating art in the home for an elevated living space.

*By Victoria Kertz*

**I**magine a home filled with plain white walls and nothing displayed on them. No colorful paintings, family portraits or glass art installations. How dull this empty expanse would be for those living within. Interior designers encourage homeowners to instead view their walls as a canvas for creativity—a space for artwork that expresses their personality, provides inspiration, brings joy and pairs well with other decor in the house. Whether as a centerpiece on a wall or as an accessory on a table, the addition of art can make an ordinary room come alive.

## EXPRESS YOURSELF

Today's art collectors range in age and aspiration. Thomas Lavin, art historian and style maker with home furnishings showrooms in West Hollywood and at the Laguna Design Center in Laguna Niguel, hosted a panel on the marriage of art and design this past March. Gallery owner Peter Blake and interior designer Sheldon Harte, both of Laguna Beach, participated, as did Ohara Davies-Gaetano, of her eponymous Ohara Davies-Gaetano Interiors in nearby Corona del Mar.

Art, the panelists agree, should not be defined by its price tag. When displayed in a home, collections should reflect the owners and their sensibilities, whether it is in a prominent location for all to enjoy, or within the confines of a more private space.

"The art you have within your home should convey the emotion that you want to live with," Davies-Gaetano says. "When I choose to eat, I choose to fuel my body and have tastes in my mouth that enlighten me and excite me, not just to be fed. I see that very similarly in art—you can either choose to buy a painting to fill a void on the wall and complete a space, or you can choose to buy pieces that tell your story.

"That story can change throughout a home. The art I have in my bedroom is very soft, to keep the space ethereal and peaceful," she continues. "But then in my living room, there's lots of juxtaposition and color and energy. It's important to pay attention to the emotional quality you want your art to



A large, colorful painting can make an impactful statement, as in this room designed by Sheldon Harte.

have for you in the various spaces of your home.”

Persuading clients to invest in collectible art is a challenge, Davies-Gaetano says, because it can be hard to visualize. “At the end of the day, I want their house to be beautiful, and I know they’re not going to have the same soulful meaning if their walls are blank. A lot of times, I don’t think clients realize how impactful the art is to an interior when they’re just looking at pictures of pretty rooms.

“I try to find something that my clients can connect to,” she says. “Whether it be going to a gallery or a museum, or showing them a home that really speaks to them and then break it down to what it is about each room that resonates with them.”

### BUY WHAT MAKES YOU HAPPY

Just because a family can afford to hire an interior designer doesn’t mean they are art aficionados. Harte, of Harte Brownlee & Associates, says the addition of art in a home is as important as furniture or lighting. As a former trustee for Laguna Art Museum, he takes particular enjoyment in initiating his clients into the world of art collecting.

“It’s interesting to see what they react to and what they don’t react to. I step back, and we have this whole conversation about ‘Why do they like it? What are they getting out of it?’” he says. “As you grow with your clients, you find out how they feel about various types of art and what makes them happy.”

Galleries as well as museums can show a client how a work of art, properly displayed, can impact a space and also how it compares with other pieces. Clients may not always want to visit



Designers advise homeowners to pick artwork they truly like, and ethereal pieces for rooms where tranquility is key.

a museum or gallery, but designers say it helps the homeowner develop their tastes. “That’s how people learn about art, by looking,” Harte says.

Blake, owner of the Ocean Avenue art gallery that bears his name, says a person’s love for a work (or works) of art is what is most vital in design. “You don’t have to fill a whole house with art. You don’t have to go out and spread your budget amongst several rooms. Get something that you really love, figure out how to install it in your house, and then enjoy it,” he says.

“It’s all about being happy,” Blake adds. “That



door swings open, and you look inside and you’re happy. And if you have no taste, and you bought a bunch of junk and that makes you happy, then that’s all that really matters.”

### AN ARTIST’S PERSPECTIVE

Laguna Beach resident Jeffrey Rovner is managing director for information at the law firm O’Melveny & Myers LLP, but he’s also a talented photographer. He works in what’s called environmental portraiture, most notably featuring circus performers. His “Cirque Portraits” collection was exhibited at the 2017 Festival of Arts, and his “Cirque Noir” collection will be shown at this summer’s Festival of Arts, almost across the street from Laguna Art-A-Fair.

Rovner says exhibiting in a festival, and particularly to be seen by so many art collectors, is a privilege. “It was a special thrill, and honor, whenever one of those collectors chose one of my photographs to display in their home, where it would become a part of their daily experience,” he says. “I feel a deep connection to those who purchase my work, and I have enjoyed hearing their stories.”

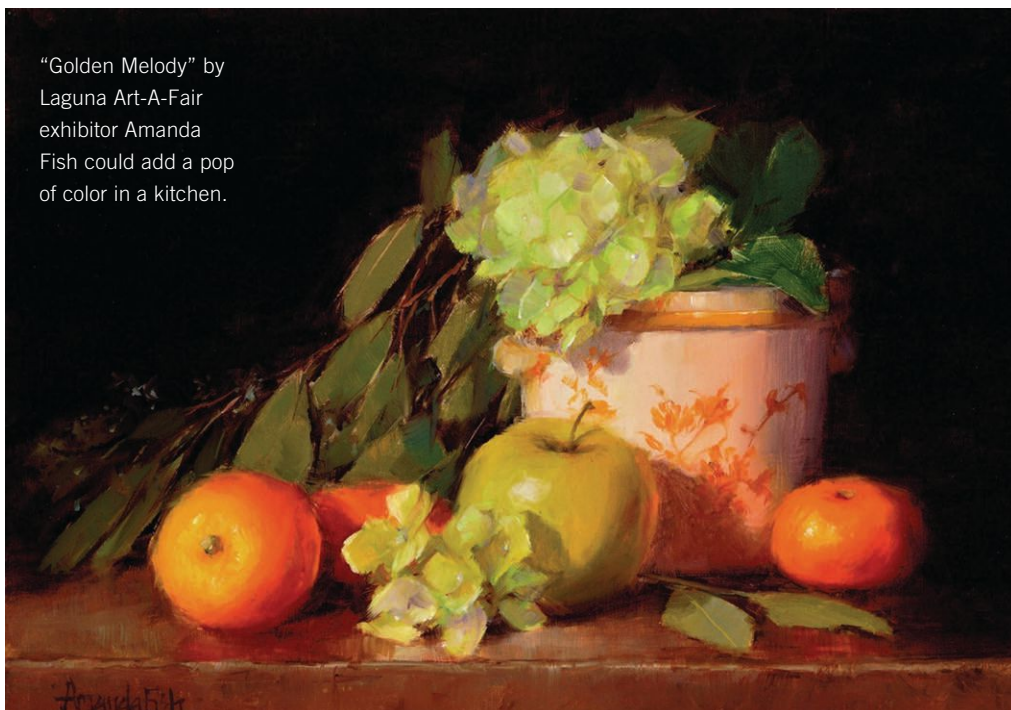
When displaying photographs, Rovner says that sometimes more is a good thing. “A series of images from the same portfolio creates a powerful display.”

### PROPER PLACEMENT

Once a homeowner has selected some fine art, Harte says there aren’t precise rules for displaying it, but he offers some guidelines and ideas for those just starting their collections.

“It all depends on one’s comfort level,” he says. “Usually, the people who take the time to select

“Golden Melody” by Laguna Art-A-Fair exhibitor Amanda Fish could add a pop of color in a kitchen.



OPPOSITE PAGE AND THIS PAGE, TOP RIGHT: GREY CRAWFORD/ROOMS DESIGNED BY SHELDON HARTE; TOP LEFT: ROBERT POWERS/ROOM DESIGNED BY OHARA DAVIES-GAETANO; BOTTOM: AMANDA FISH/COURTESY OF LAGUNA ART-A-FAIR



Colorful artwork can enhance a bathroom.

art will think about placement; they want to put it where it can be seen. Significant investment pieces should not end up in the garage or hall closet. ... If it contains a questionable subject or nudity, then the piece is typically put in a bedroom.”

While it’s important to illuminate a piece of art so that it can really shine, another factor to consider is the amount of sunlight hitting a particular spot, which could fade the artwork over time. Harte suggests installing Renson built-in sun protection or MechoSystems motorized shades, if a home isn’t already equipped with these. “If it’s not already built in, we usually install astronomical timers, which will automatically lower the shades when the sun reaches a particular level,” Harte says. “The shades also will turn according to the time of day and season in order to either increase or decrease the amount of natural light.”

When dealing with 3-D artwork, like sculptures, Harte says selecting the size of a piece need not be limited by a home’s size, but rather should be based on “sensibility for scale, size and space.”

“Somebody may want their entryway to feel

like an art gallery and choose to display a large sculpture,” he says. “Others may think that’s too cold, so they’ll use a small sculpture on a pedestal or table.”

For someone just getting started in art collecting, Harte suggests attending museum shows to identify what types of art you’re attracted to and which artists you like. “If you want to become a collector, you might need an art consultant to help curate your collection,” he suggests. “Some people want to be more organic and research it themselves on Artsy and Artnet [websites]. The more you read, the wiser you can become about picking the right time to buy art.

“Choose the best art you can afford,” he continues. “For some paintings, maybe you can afford the original or maybe [you] need to get the print—it all depends on affordability factor and what you can buy comfortably.”

No matter what piece is selected, installing artwork in any room is a priceless addition that’s sure to elevate the space and bring joy to residents and visitors alike. **LBM**

## DESIGN ON DISPLAY

This year, Laguna Art-A-Fair will add a highly anticipated new feature dedicated to art and interior design. In a town brimming with luxury homes and art galleries, the exhibit is sure to be a match made in festival heaven.

Starting June 29, the Luxury Home Display area at Art-A-Fair will include a massive design wall where visitors can envision fine art in various settings or as part of their next remodel.

The displays will feature top luxury design brands and one-on-one consultations with interior design expert Nancy Vengoechea of Vengo Design International. The idea to feature design with fine art incorporated was the brainchild of festival promoters Gina Waggenger and Jo Beth Prud’homme.

“A house—with art in it—is a home,” Waggenger says. “... Top-tier furnishings and interior design have long been used to sell properties, but now developers and brokers often turn to fine art, too, to excite the eyes of buyers with means.

“Art adds an extra layer of ‘je ne sais quoi.’ Buyers don’t even realize what it is that makes a house pop, but a good house with good furniture, beautiful kitchen and good art really sets the tone for what feels like fine living.”

Expect to see the latest design trends in kitchen, flooring, lighting, wall finishes and furnishings, with brands like Bang & Olufsen,



A special exhibit at Laguna Art-A-Fair will show different ways to display a piece of art in the home.

Lightopia, Famosa, Swing Tables and Mod Shop, as well as companies such as Interior Style Designs and Desiree Harding of Luxury Wall Finishes. Art-A-Fair partner UC Luxury Real Estate will offer advice on how redesign can increase home values.

Entrance to the design display is included with a general admission ticket to Art-A-Fair, as well as a Passport to the Arts ticket, which grants unlimited admission to the Festival of Arts, Laguna Art-A-Fair and Sawdust Art & Craft Festival all summer, along with one-time free parking at Act V parking lot on Laguna Canyon Road and free shuttle services.

On Thursday nights, various brands will host VIP gatherings within the Luxury Home Display

area with giveaways, celebrity chef presentations, live music and a genuine Picasso piece shown. Tickets must be purchased in advanced online for the VIP events.

The cooperative of artists that make up Art-A-Fair are eager to share their vision of design and art with Laguna Beach.

“It is relatively easy for most of us to look at a piece of art and say ‘Wow, I like that,’ but we are not so adept at seeing the bigger picture and how many things can work together to make that art even better,” says Art-A-Fair President Michael Cahill.

“Our new home design element has brought renewed energy and a refreshing outlook among this year’s artists. I can’t wait to see this.”