

BUYING & SELLING WALL DÉCOR



Thoughtfully designed, art is now seen as something that motivates and nurtures in addition to something that is decorative

BY SUE WARDEN



As the era of excess diminishes, customers are moving toward making careful purchasing decisions. Gone are the days of filling their homes with irrelevant items. Rather, consumers are taking the time to choose decorative items that are meaningful and which reflect their personal style.

BUYING

There are extensive choices in wall art. Paintings, murals, wall sculptures, mirrors, wall furniture and appliques in a myriad of styles and materials can make the buying process rather complicated.

When making purchasing decisions it's useful to have the various classifications handy, so you can select a variety of pieces in order to offer customers adequate choice when it comes to finding the perfect wall decoration for their home.

Paintings and murals are works of art created with mediums like pencil, watercolour, oil, acrylic, and so on. These pieces can instantly change a bare wall into a conversation starter, and can be purchased in various sizes, colours, and themes to work with your customers' lifestyles and budgets.

A strong trend towards traditional images is prevalent. Antique maps, birds and botanicals are good choices. Authentic, nostalgic pieces such as these create warmth and comfort, and are sophisticated and beautiful at the same time.

Wall sculpture is a wonderful way for your customers to add depth to their rooms. Wood and iron are two popular mediums used to create wall sculpture. Both convey a sense of tradition and a rustic flavour. Scouting your local area for artists and artisans is a great way to carry one-of-a-kind items and support your local economy.

Mirrors, bookshelves and cabinets are considered wall furniture and employed not only for decoration but also for practical purposes. Small items such as wall cubes and shelves serve as storage slash wall art for customers living in apartments, condominiums and space-restricted homes.

Appliqués and borders, as well as motivational word motifs, that either stick

or are rubbed on to walls and furniture are currently very popular. This type of wall art is easy to carry given it doesn't take up a great deal of space.

Lighting is another easy way to give life to walls while creating warmth and ambiance at the same time.

MERCHANDISING

Certainly the most efficient and effective way to display wall art is on your walls. Hanging art pieces to resemble what they may look like in your customers' homes will help you sell the product. For example, hanging a beautiful piece of art above a faux mantle helps customers visualize the piece in their home and makes for a unique store display as well.

Mirrors can be strategically placed to visually increase the size of your store. Once again, this serves as a practical way to enhance your store, while educating customers on how to implement the product in their own homes.

Bookshelves and cubes are best attached to walls and should be merchandised with small items that customers might have in their own homes, such as vases and picture frames. Cross-merchandising will help your customers envision the product in their home and increases sales.

If you carry appliqués and wall lettering, ensure an example of each phrase is displayed on a wall so your customers can see exactly what it is they're purchasing. Taking an example of the product out of the package is essential to ensure good sell through.

Lighting can also be displayed within a vignette, to illuminate a display while showing off the product. Sconces and wall-mounted candle holders look beautiful on a wall display and are a trendy option.

SELLING

Creating a wall display in their home can often be challenging for a customer. Offering a seminar is an excellent way to educate them on how to create a fashionable display. Vendor support is a good place to start. Ask a vendor to come in and speak to a group of customers about creating displays and hanging art. Consumers crave information.

Hold an "art show." Invite customers to come and enjoy refreshments while browsing your various wall decoration options. Provide a discount on any wall art purchased during the event.

If you carry work from local artists or artisans, ask them to come to your store and work on a piece during store hours. This creates an interesting and provocative experience for customers, while encouraging sales of the artists' work. Most artists welcome this opportunity. ■

Sue Warden is a seasoned television host, designer, decorator, author and former retailer.



Images clockwise from opposite page: Sanctuary for Birds, Celadon; Sun Mirror; Weave Plate, Mirror Tree, Oval Mirror; Samaco Trading; Wall Sconce, Winward Silks of Canada; Leaves and Butterflies Wall Art, Samaco Trading. Company details start on page 42.