

Where The Art Is

WE ASKED THE LEADERS AT THREE INTERIOR DESIGN FIRMS TO SHARE THEIR COLLECTING TIPS AND CURATION SECRETS. SPOILER ALERT: THEY WANT YOU TO FOLLOW YOUR HEART.

By Rhonda Reinhart

1 JEREMIAH YOUNG, KIBLER & KIRCH (BILLINGS, MONTANA)

How important is original art in a project?

I don't think that I've ever seen a successfully designed space without great art. There's a sometimes subtle but essential quality that original art imparts to a home. It's the brushstrokes, the tiny imperfections, and the sense that human hands have made a work of art that really has a great effect on a space.

Where do you look for unique pieces?

I believe that good design speaks to its place in the world. We seek out artists local to the home in order to tell the story of where we are.

Who are some of your favorite artists from the American West?

I have to plug the Indigenous artists I represent in Stapleton Gallery, which I started a few years ago as a sister business to our design firm. Ben Pease is a young artist whose potential cannot be overstated. He will be one of the greats—much like another one of our artists, Kevin Red Star. Kevin might be the most important living Native artist of his generation. We also love the work of Judd Thompson, who is not afraid of color, and his work is kind of blowing up right now. Photography belongs in every home and doesn't get the same attention as paintings in the West, so I try to incorporate black-and-white photos into every space. Audrey Hall is the best working in Montana at the moment.



How about art-buying tips for homeowners?

My best tip for acquiring art is to buy what you love—not what you think is a good investment. That said, I also really encourage people to reach out to galleries that represent their favorite artists to procure commissions. That way you are getting to know your favorite artist personally and getting the expertise of the gallery curators that can help you make smart art investments. kiblerandkirch.com

2 RUSH JENKINS AND KLAUS BAER, WRJ DESIGN (JACKSON, WYOMING)

How important is original art in a project?

Baer: Art is critical. And I think it's important to remember that art does not necessarily have to mean expensive. It should mean what you love. It really should be about collecting the pieces of art that integrate with something that speaks to you, which is different for all of us. **Jenkins:** Bringing meaningful art into the home is such an important step in the design process, one that often determines much of the work we do in a space. Our clients often have certain pieces that are personally very meaningful, and so we work to ensure that the fabrics, palette, furniture, and textures are complementing the art and never fighting it.

Where do you look for unique pieces?

Jenkins: Typically, we travel extensively around the world for inspiration and to source pieces for our clients. Meanwhile, the art scene in Jackson combined with the spectacular natural surroundings is a large part of why we moved our business here from New York in 2010. It has always been such a pleasure to take our clients to local galleries to experience the art firsthand and find what pieces speak to them. A visit to Jackson's Turner Fine Art, for instance, resulted in the purchase of a special work by renowned local artist Kathryn Mapes Turner. The painting, *Elk in the Mist*, now presides over a French aged-oak dining room table with a Belgian bluestone top in the clients' Jackson-area home (pictured, top right).

How about art-buying tips for homeowners?

Jenkins: As Klaus said, first and foremost, what do you love? If you're able to collect what you love, then you're going to enjoy looking at the art every single day. And then it's extraordinarily important that you look at art in the context of the environment where it's being placed. There is a magic that happens when you put the right art within the right place. And if you don't, the art's not going to sing as much as it could. Understanding scale, understanding the size, understanding the palette, understanding the color, the content—all those things are really important.

Baer: Changing a frame—for instance, from contemporary to traditional—can really change the way you experience the piece of art. So even though that's a little detail, it's a big detail. wrjdesign.com



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3 JULIE DODSON, DODSON INTERIORS (HOUSTON)

How important is original art in a project?

Art defines the personality of a room and can really help speak to the personality of the homeowner as well. Original art is important, yes, but even more important is art that tells *your* story. I have a client who travels throughout Africa for work, and his journeys are documented with photography. We blew up the images as artwork in his breakfast room. It feels personal, beautiful, and helps to share his story.

Where do you look for unique pieces?

In Texas, my go-to galleries are Dimmitt Contemporary Art, McClain Gallery, and Laura Rathe Fine Art; and Dinner Party Antiques for vintage in Round Top.

Who are some of your favorite artists from the American West?

There are so many strong Texas artists: John Holt Smith, Sarah Ferguson, John Alexander, Christian Eckart, Paul Meyer. We recently installed a work by Houston artist Joe Mancuso.



How about art-buying tips for homeowners?

I think it's important to do your own research. Our job is to figure out who a client is when designing their home, but art is personal. It's intimate. With art, when you find a piece you love, often you can't explain why you love it. It's important for the homeowner to do a bit of legwork, to get out there and see what they gravitate towards. dodsoninteriors.com