

HANGING ART

BY SAXON HENRY

You've just bought a painting and you rush home to hang it.

And then the doubt sets in: Too low? Too close to the window? Maybe it should be lower.

Is this the best vantage point?

The rule, of course, is to hang art at eye level. But what does that mean? The top is at eye level? The middle? And whose eye?

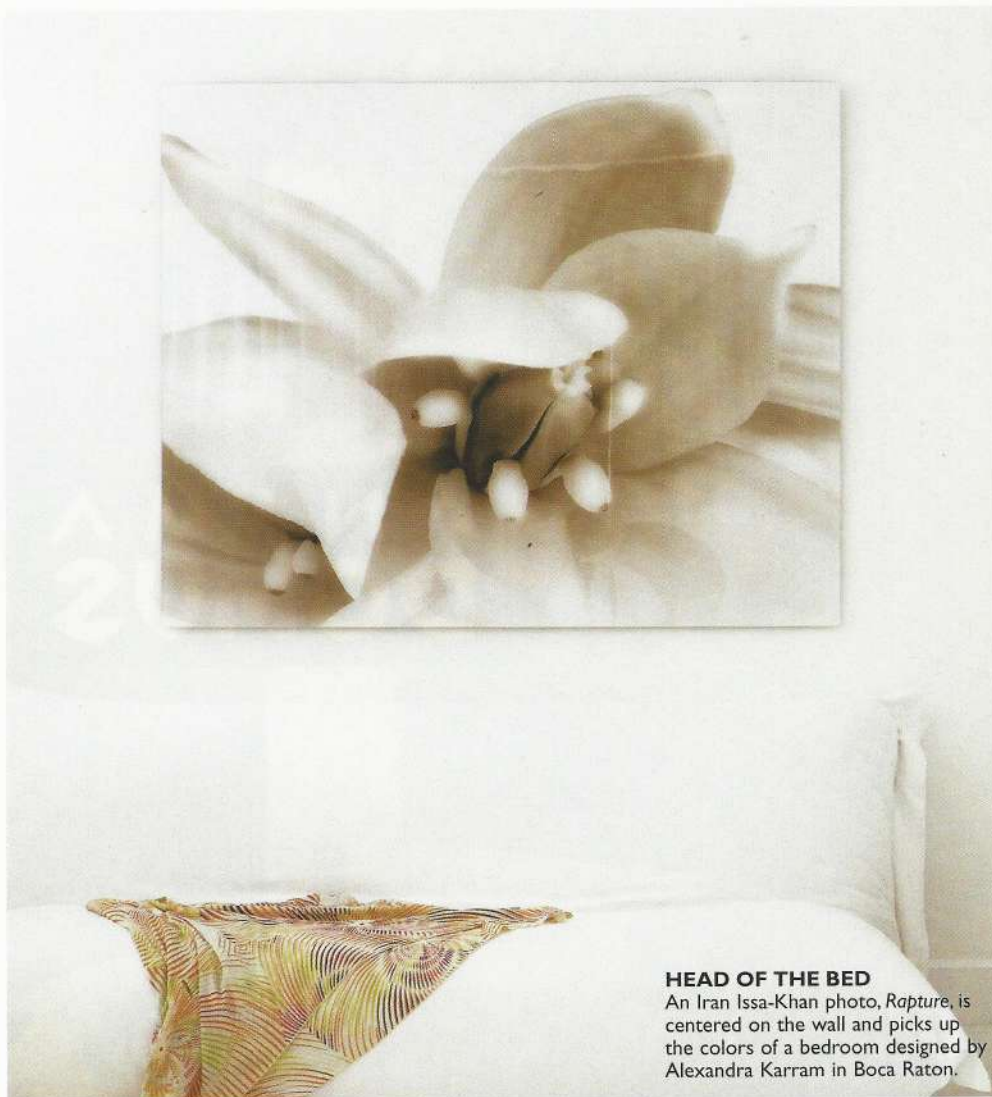
Interior designers and art collectors will tell you there is no magic formula. "I enjoy playing around with different possibilities before any final decisions are made," said Rosa de la Cruz, the Miami collector. "It's not about my walls; it's about context and how to best present the art within that context."

This year, she is installing paintings in her foyer on the low side, she said, "in order to create a horizontal perspective."

Many mega-collectors have the luxury of building spaces dedicated to their collections, in essence turning parts of their homes into museums. If you are building a home, Ramon Pacheco, a Miami architect, advises you to keep your most valued pieces of art in mind, especially the larger ones. "You'll need large walls in key places for those," he said, "and you'll want to pay close attention to the lighting plan from the start."

Of course, anyone moving into a new Miami loft condo had better also consider the effect of glare from all that glass, and the fact that there will not be that many interior walls on which to hang art.

A designer in West Palm Beach, Gay Kanuth, thinks that homeowners can benefit from thinking in terms of size and proportion. "Let's say you have a 10-foot-long wall and a small painting that's 1 1/2 feet tall by 2 feet wide," she said. Instead of hanging it over the sofa, where it will be lost, she suggested putting it above the side table. "Then put a tall piece of sculpture or a nice indoor tree on the other side of the sofa for balance," she said. When you finally get a painting large enough to occupy the space over the sofa, you can move the smaller piece and the sculpture to other places, she said.



HEAD OF THE BED

An Iran Issa-Khan photo, *Rapture*, is centered on the wall and picks up the colors of a bedroom designed by Alexandra Karram in Boca Raton.

Sometimes it pays to go against your own instincts. Nick Cindric, the gallerist who owns Rocket Projects in Wynwood, said a good rule of thumb is to hang a work lower than you think is right.

Kanuth agreed. "People tend to hang pictures too high, and when a painting is too high, you can't connect with it," she said.

Cindric said the best formula is to measure one-third of the way down from the top of the work, and put that at eye level. The Sarasota artist Dasha Reich believes it's the middle of the painting that should be at or

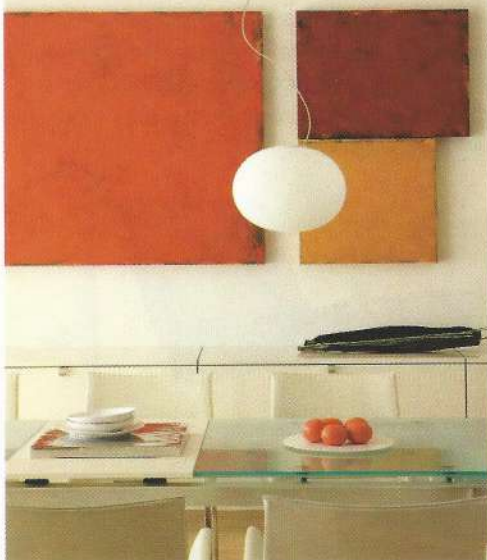
near eye level. Obviously there is a great deal of room for personal preference.

Toby Zack, an interior designer in Fort Lauderdale who owned an art gallery for five years, said that the most glaring mistakes usually involve scale and proportion. "You could adore a painting," she said, "but if it's the wrong scale and proportion for the space it will throw off the balance of the entire room."

"There's usually another place for everything," she said. "Don't give up on the piece—just move it around."

DINING BY ART

A Flos Glo-Ball lamp accents square paintings in a Key Biscayne condo designed by Rene Gonzalez.



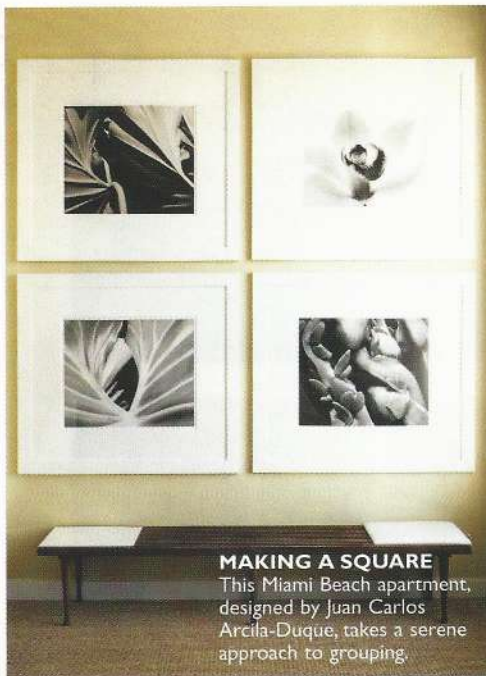
Sometimes it's best to live with a painting for a while before committing it to one spot. Lean it up against the wall and study it. That way you can move it to different walls and see how you like it.

Art is all about mood, said Rene Gonzalez, the Miami architect who designed the new CIFO museum and the newly renovated lobby at the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA). "When I select or hang pieces, I think about how I want the space to feel," he said. "I take into consideration whether my clients want a room to feel sedate or dynamic, because that will determine whether I hang one large piece or a series of smaller pieces."

He used a grouping of paintings in a condominium he recently completed at Aqua in Miami Beach to counterbalance a wall of windows that overlook the ocean. "One static, heavy painting would have created a symmetrical, heavy space," he said, "so we grouped smaller pieces that had a calming quality to make the room feel light and airy."

If you collect sculpture, Cindric said, there is one very important thing to remember. "People sometimes make the mistake of cramming sculpture into the corner or against a wall," he said. "But it is meant to be seen from all sides, so place it so that it can be viewed in the round."

So if you hang art, does that mean you have to treat your home like a museum and paint all the walls white? Experts disagree on

**MAKING A SQUARE**

This Miami Beach apartment, designed by Juan Carlos Arcila-Duque, takes a serene approach to grouping.

that one too. Dasha Reich, the artist in Sarasota, said that galleries use pure white to get you to concentrate on the painting. At home, she said, she uses a mid tone on the walls, to compliment the painting and give it more intimacy with its surroundings.

"People shouldn't be afraid of using color on the walls," Kanuth said, "although if they have a big collection, white is always good because it shows off the colorful pieces best."

Rosa de la Cruz chooses white walls and shies away from colorful furniture as well. "We do not want any colors conflicting with the art, unless the artist specifically asks for it," she said.

Of course, choosing art is subjective, and the hanging and displaying of art should be subjective as well. "At first it is overwhelming and you feel a little bit dumb," said de la Cruz. "But don't be intimidated or get discouraged. Just keep learning."

The Miami Beach interior designer Juan Carlos Arcila-Duque has amassed an enviable collection of photography dating from the 1920s to the 1990s and is the chair of the junior host committee for Art Basel Miami Beach. "Little by little, you will be able to display things with greater confidence," he said. "Some people feel like they have to build a big collection to be respected, but that's not true. Small collections can be very charming."

A small collection is also much easier to manage, especially as you start buying new pieces. Christine Taplin, who owns the Sagamore Hotel with her husband, Martin, and curates the art collection there, has been collecting for years. But she still feels a spike of anxiety each time she buys a new piece. "It's such a rush," she said, "but then reality sets in and you have to figure out how you're going to install it!"

"The museums and galleries in Miami are great resources," Taplin said. "They are not there just to sell art; they are there to teach." ■

THREE FOR LUNCH

Watercolors by Till Freiwald hang side by side at the Sagamore hotel.

