

WALL GROUPINGS

Stylish and Profitable

By Greg Perkins, CPF

Hanging groups of art and photos together offers great looks for your clients—and more opportunities for framing

Framed art groupings have been enjoying a surge in interest for several years and have reached a level of popularity most framers have never seen before. I recall my grandparents having groupings on their walls when I was a child. What I remember were framed family photos arranged in a less-than-sophisticated way. In other words, wall groupings are nothing new but, like many things, they have cycled in and out of fashion and are now back in a big way!

There is a fresh approach to many of the groupings seen today. In a way, it almost seems like anything goes, whereas in the past there used to be a lot more attention to using matched sets of art or matching frames. Another difference is that, in years past, people tended to want what their friends and family had; as a result, there were the same types of groupings over and over again. Now, there is a greater desire to express individual personalities and show off unique styles.

For the past few years, art has been mixed together in groupings I would never previously have thought to hang in the same room, let alone the same wall! More and more people want to surround themselves with things they love and enjoy, not just whatever is popular and matches the sofa. Of course, there is still that faction, too!

What are you doing currently to share this popular trend



A striking wall grouping makes a great centerpiece for a room and typically involves creating a number of eye-catching frame designs.

with your customers? As a custom framing professional, it's up to you to impart your knowledge with your existing customers as well as your community of potential customers. This includes educating them so they know the latest and greatest styles. Since you are in a visual business, it is easier to show ideas than it is to just talk about them. Be sure to include pictures and information about groupings in your marketing messages. For those who come into your store, have an image library of ideas to show, and, when space permits, include a wall grouping or two in your gallery displays.

Wall Groupings 101

A great starting point is to learn all you can about groupings. You can do online searches using keywords such as “wall groupings,” “framed art groupings,” or “displaying framed art.” Also, look in home decorating magazines or on bloggers' sites. If there is new construction in your area, model homes can also be a source for getting ideas. Once you are familiar with everything that is going on, you will be better prepared to help your clients.

Get the Word Out!

There are numerous ways you can communicate with your customers and customers-to-be about groupings, including your advertising and other marketing. Some of the places to

include pictures and information about wall groupings are:

- Website
- Social Media
- E-blasts
- Newsletters
- Advertisements in local publications

In-Store Merchandising

Your store walls should be like a billboard for the things you want to sell. What could be better than selling multiple pieces to one customer? In the same amount of space where a

single oversized image fits, you can also display an effective grouping of smaller pieces. If you have enough wall space, consider showing two (or more) vastly different types of groupings so people can see for themselves how varied they can be.

Also, keep a library of photo images in a real or virtual scrapbook. You can easily find pictures online and in magazines, but take pictures yourself when you see cool ideas. When people come in, you can show them so much more than what you have space to display. If you install groupings for your customers, be sure to photograph them to include in your image library, too.

Benefits of Wall Groupings

First and foremost, there must be a benefit to your customers or you will not be successful for the long haul. The benefit for them is that this is a popular trend, so you will be assisting them in creating a stylish look for their homes.

The benefit to you is in the added profitability to your business. It is far easier to sell more to existing customers than it is to find new customers. When you sell two or more pieces to one customer, you maximize profitability. It generally takes far less time to sell multiple designs to one customer than it does to sell the same designs to multiple people. Since your time is valuable, the time you save can be used to help another paying customer, or you can complete frame orders and move on to something else.

Types of Art in Groupings

Sets of art can be grouped together, but there is big move-



Here is an example of a grouping of various styles of art. There is some effort put into the color scheme without the pieces perfectly matching each other or the room.

ment today towards mixing art in new ways. Sometimes in groupings you can see a common thread, such as all photos, all watercolors, all mirrors, etc. Art of various styles can also be grouped together, and the only thing in common might be a color. But there is another trend to mixing pieces in which the common thread may only be that the homeowner likes all of the pieces. There are no rules, so people mix and match just about anything; it just takes some talent to do this successfully.

Types of Arrangements

Wall groupings today vary from highly structured to absolutely random. There is uniform spacing, varied spacing, and no spacing between adjacent frames. There is more of an attempt for people to express their unique style, so it comes down to a matter of how common or outlandish they want to be.

When you perform an online search for “displaying framed art” or similar key words, you will not only see pictures of groupings in rooms but also templates for various ways of arranging multiple pieces of framed art. Here are a few of the more common types.

Grids

For this popular look, frames all have the same outer dimension and are hung in perfect rows, such as three over three or two over four. Sometimes they have spaces between each piece; at other times, they are butted up to one another. This look is most common when displaying a matched set of art, but it may also be used for some-

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The grouping goes "uphill" on the wall due to the shelves. This asymmetrical look is a fresh look that a lot of younger people are choosing for their homes.

thing like a grouping of black-and-white photos in a variety of sizes with the mat borders adjusted so the frames are all of the same outer dimension. You can also take a decorative print and cut it into sections to frame as a grouping.

Random

To create this look successfully takes some careful planning. Although the results may look unplanned, balancing shapes, sizes and colors can require a lot of thought. In addition to the grouping itself, the arrangement may need to



Perfect grids are quite popular. We often see these with maps of Paris in them but, in this case, a single decorative print was cut into nine equal sections. That means more moulding is used so you improve your custom frame order. This order went from 19' to 58.5', but was actually double that amount because it's a stacked frame combination.



Groupings can be functional as well as beautiful. Clock kits are often available at craft stores and you can create the rest. You can forego the numbers and use art, photos, or objects in the frames.

work with nearby furnishings. That can either mean the frames “wrap” around it or leave a negative space simply because a piece of furniture is there. Random groupings are great for collectors because it is much easier to add new pieces than with a more structured arrangement. Randomness is also well-suited to diverse types of art that you plan to hang together.

Vertical

Most groupings go across the wall. But in rooms with high ceilings, going up the wall helps to fill space and can help a room look more finished. Vertical groupings can be more challenging because some pieces look too heavy to be high on the wall while others lack enough color or detail to be seen easily when out of typical viewing range. **PFM**

Greg Perkins, CPF, is in his 44th year in the framing industry. Starting out as a retailer, he worked at Larson-Juhl for 24 years and is now an industry consultant, focusing on frame design and retailing. Greg is also an author, contributing editor, industry educator, and artist. He can be contacted at gregperkinsconsulting@outlook.com or 770-942-2028



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