

A person is jumping in the air on a sandy beach, holding a large palm frond over their head. The background shows a calm sea and distant mountains under a clear sky. The text is overlaid in a warm, golden-brown color.

HOW TO FRAME AND HANG PHOTO ART IN YOUR HOME

A nifty guide to the questions that always arise

JENNY JACOBSSON

jennyjacobsson.com // facebook.com/jennyjacobssonphotography

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A greeting

Ways to mount, frame and hang an image are endless and the only thing setting limits is the imagination. Undeniably, it is very personal what you like or not. Framing should not be underestimated in how much it can affect how the image is highlighted, how it truly can emphasize and give your artwork justice. But it can also do the opposite ...

It can be easy to forget that a mat, frame, and glass not only serves to make the work look better, but also has a practical function. They help to stabilize your work and protect against bumps, greasy fingerprints, dust, UV rays, and other harmful things and can therefore be very important for the preservation of your artwork.

Because taste differs, and in addition all homes are so different, it is impossible to say "THIS is how you should do your framing". Therefore, you should not see this document as a rulebook on how you "should" do. But see this guide rather as filled with tips and suggestions about what you may need to consider when you want to hang artwork at home.

Do not forget, like most things when it comes to imagery, rules are meant to be broken!



*Love,
Jenny*

1

Size

The first thing you need to decide is probably a size of the artwork that suits you, your home, and your wallet.

If you already have an image at home, the size of the frame (both exterior dimensions and the thickness of the frame borders) is what you need to consider.

If you are to buy an image, besides the frame, the size of the image itself is to be chosen.

Size of the image

As most things, selection of size is based on taste. But there are a few other aspects you may consider:

IMAGE SUBJECT Some subjects may fit best as small images where you need to go close and really take a moment to contemplate. Others may fit best as large images that can not be missed and that really has an effect on the room. Consider what you think will be best for your image. Do you want it to be fully visible without any effort, or do you have an image that requires a more intimate interaction?

WALL The size may also depend on which wall the image is to be hung. If the wall is large, a larger image can be suitable. If the wall is small, you might not want the image to feel oversized. Sometimes it is difficult to estimate how large an image of a certain measurement actually is, so I strongly recommend making a simple template out of paper or something else you have available at home, and simply hold or tape it up on the intended wall. It is easy to believe that an image is larger than it actually is based on a given measurement, so to avoid getting an image that feels tiny once it is hung, or vice versa, try this method.

FURNITURE The size can also be perceived differently depending on what furniture is placed nearby. A huge and wide sofa can give an image the perception of being smaller than with a pair of dainty armchairs.

TIP!

Look into what frame you want to use BEFORE you actually order the image so that you do not get in trouble because they do not fit together. This is especially important if you want to buy a pre-made frame from a regular store where they usually only are available in certain standard measurements. You can circumvent the problem by ordering a custom-made frame from a framer. Or why not make your own frame (read Outsource or frame yourself)?

Size of the whole piece

Same aspects go here when it comes to wall and furniture, as for size of the actual image.

What I would like to point out is that you should not forget that a mat or a frame with wide frame borders contribute to the total size of the whole piece. So when you are thinking about what size to choose, consider if you prefer a mat and if so, in what size (read Why a mat?). Then test the mentioned method with holding a template on the intended wall, to avoid you get an image that together with a wide mat or wide frame borders, makes the whole piece too big for its location.

The effect with increasing the total size of the whole piece with a mat or wide frame borders can of course be used in case you don't have a big image, but you want a piece of an impressive size on your wall!

SUMMARY SIZE

To choose size, in addition to taste, consider:

- >> **IMAGE SUBJECT** Different image subjects are better suited in different sizes
- >> **WALL** Take the wall's dimension in consideration
- >> **FURNITURE** The size of furniture affects the perception of the artwork's size
- >> **SIZE OF THE WHOLE PIECE** including matting and frame borders

As so much else in life, an increased size goes hand in hand with an increased cost. So another important aspect is of course **ECONOMY!**



*An image in portrait format can be beautiful with the same height as an image in landscape format when hung together.
Above is a template I often use to decide sizes for [my art prints](#), available to buy in limited editions.*

2

Frame or no frame?

A frame can truly emphasize and do your artwork justice. But sometimes, it also can do the exact opposite...

It can easily be forgotten that framing isn't only to make the artwork prettier, but also has a practical purpose. The frame helps to stabilize and protect against impact and abrasion. So to use a frame or not can also affect the preservation of your artwork.



The storm starter

Since the frame has a practical purpose, affects how your image is emphasized, and also in itself can be a beautiful interior detail to go hand in hand with your other style, there are a few things to consider.

MATERIAL Frames come in different materials (wood, metal, composites, etc.). Think about what suits with other frames in the same room or what looks good together with your other interior decor. Wood vs metal for example can give a totally different expression when it comes to softness vs hardness.

CHOICE OF COLOR When you select color, you can either go on gut feeling, match with other frames in the room, or hold up different colors with your artwork to see what suits it. But there are also a couple of other things you can think about for color selection:

Drama and contrast For those who like drama an easy choice can be a black prominent frame. Something you might not think of is that the darkest of an image may not be completely black. For example, a shadow can be dark blue. So if you do not want a black frame, but still want a frame that creates contrast and drama, you can consider choosing a frame that is as dark or darker than the darkest of the image. This can open up to select a frame that is more gray than black. Or do the opposite and use the same principle but with what is brightest in the image!

Focus on the image subject Others want a more neutral frame to allow the image to get more attention than the frame, and then *do not* choose a frame that is darker than the darkest in the image (or brighter than the brightest in the image).

Color matching Black and white (or its grayscale) are often easy to match with other interior decor. But you can also choose to pick a color in the image subject and apply that color to the frame. Perhaps your image has brown in it, and then a brown frame can provide a nice harmony (which can match other wooden items in your home). Or why not a dark blue frame to match that dark blue shade?

AS A WHOLE Since frames come in all colors, materials, and with or without embellishments, a good question to ask yourself is if you want the artwork to stand out and be seen properly by contrasting the rest of your interior decor? Or if you want the artwork to harmonize with the decor and be a part of it?

FOCUS It is also important to think about if you want *the frame* to be the one

that gets the most attention and makes the biggest impression of the room. Or if it is *the image* itself and *the subject* that are to have the biggest focus. There are many frames that are incredibly beautiful in themselves and can be a great contribution to the decor. When the frame itself is so expressive it risks, however, to draw the attention away from the image. If you want the image to be what speaks the loudest you can consider choosing a more neutral frame that rather highlights the image.

ALTERNATIVES TO A FRAME Today there are several beautiful and fun alternatives to a frame, such as mounting the image behind plexiglass, or directly on a back board that can be mounted on the wall (you can get a sense of the image hovering above the wall if you hang it with a strip of wood on the back) . However, note that the edges and corners are more vulnerable to bumps and abrasion when you do not have a frame, for example when moving. In terms of plexiglass, read more under Glass and alternatives.

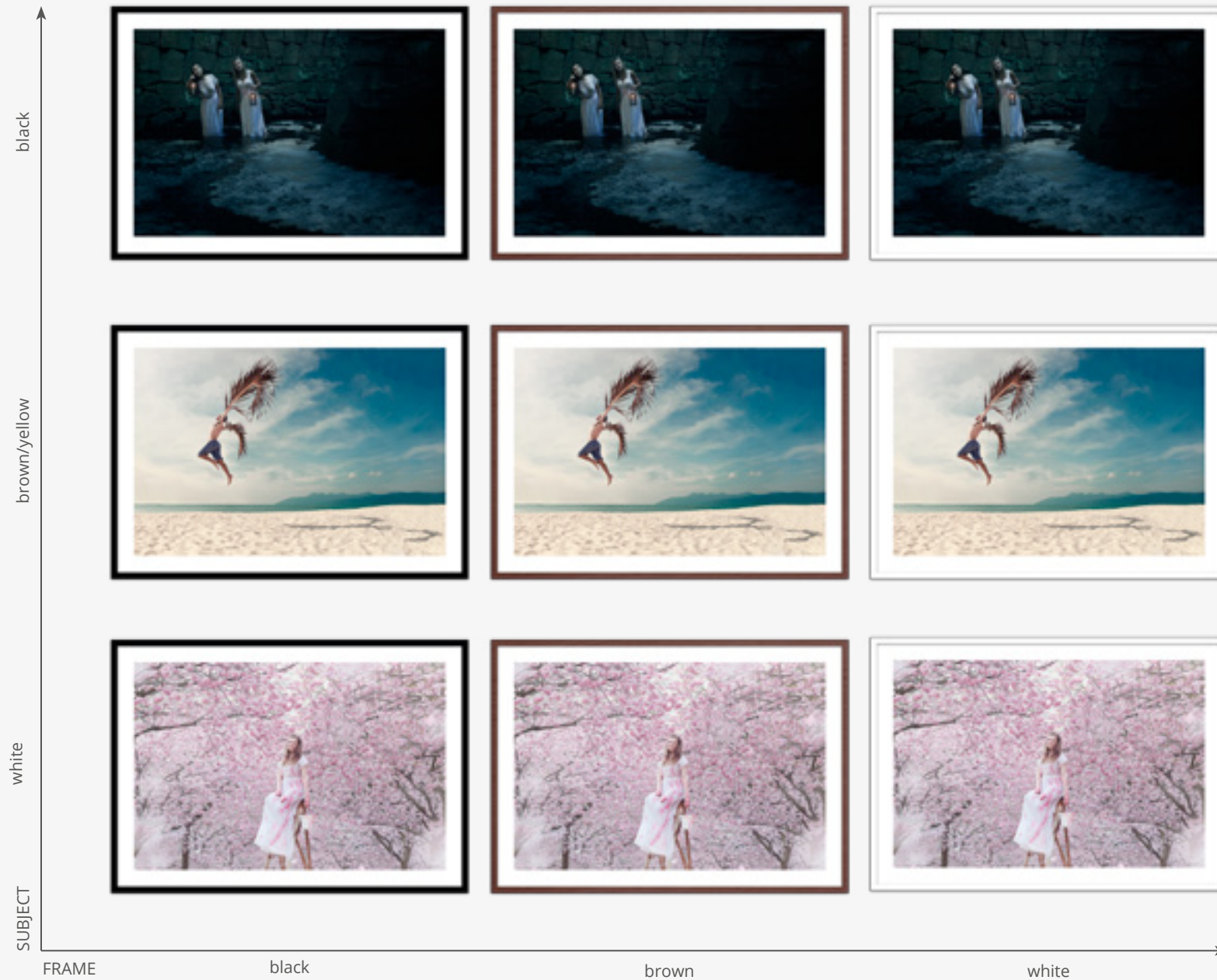
SUMMERY FRAME

To chose framing, consider:

- >> **MATERIAL** Softness vs hardness
- >> **CHOICE OF COLOR** Put your style into it, but take the colors of the image into consideration as well
- >> **AS A WHOLE** How does the artwork relate to other interior decor?
- >> **FOCUS** Contemplate whether the frame steals the focus from the image
- >> **ALTERNATIVES TO A FRAME** E.g. plexiglass or mounting on a back board

When ordering a portrait from me and [my commissioned portrait photography service](#) you can choose to get a personalized frame guide. In the guide I will digitally put your personal image together with different frame colors so that you more easily can visualize what suits it and you think looks beautiful with your image.

TIP!



Seeking Neverland (top, a lot of black in the image), *Man of passage* (middle, a lot of brown/yellow in the image) and *The burden* (bottom, a lot of white in the image) with a black, brown, and white frame, respectively. What combination appeals to you the most? The more expected one according to the tips above, or perhaps the more unexpected?

3

Glass and alternatives

You probably will not get away from the choice to have glass in front of the image or not. There are in addition to aesthetic aspects pros and cons with both choices.

PROTECTION An important aspect of putting glass in front of your image is that it acts as a protection against bumps, greasy fingerprints, dust, dirt, insects, and other things in the air which can be harmful such as smoke or nicotine particles.

Another important thing to consider when it comes to photography is that the sun's UV rays are very harmful to the image. With the right glass your artwork can get extra protection (special UV resistant glass can be ordered). However, I want to point out that whether you choose UV resistant glass or not, be sure not to hang your picture in direct or near sunlight because the effect of the sunlight is so harsh it can damage even the most protected image. Ask your framer for more tips regarding this issue.

REFLECTIONS It is not only the protection that can vary from glass to glass, but



The fall

also how much it reflects. It can be extremely frustrating if you can barely see your artwork because of strong reflections from lights or windows in the room. It may be wise to consider getting a glass that minimizes glare and you can usually get it from a framer. Often, glare-free glass is more expensive than ordinary glass. However, depending on economy, it may be well worth the investment.

SHARPNESS AND DETAILS The same applies to quality of glass in general. To maintain the sharpness and details of the image you should consider a quality glass. As in most other cases, the choice of glass is up to your wallet. A budget frame from a regular store can function well as mechanical protection. But be careful to note which glass that comes with it. Sometimes it is a hard plastic instead of real glass. If you have invested in a work of art or a personal image that means a lot to you, where details really have been taken into consideration to highlight the image at its best, it might be worth considering a quality glass to continue to emphasize that something you value highly.

ALTERNATIVES The most common thing when talking about the glass in front of a photo is probably to think about the glass that sits in front of the image in a frame. An alternative could be to mount the image behind plexiglass, without a frame. For plexiglass the same aspects apply as the other previously lifted regarding glass. If you prefer not to use glass, there are of course options. One can, of course, hang the image just as it is without any protection, but then the image is completely exposed to possible damage. A good alternative is to laminate the image. Lamination is a plastic layer that is placed over the image as protection and is available from matte to glossy. Lamination can look really great and a good laminate allows you to wipe the image even if it gets greasy or dirty. A laminated image can be placed in a frame.

SUMMERY GLASS

When choosing glass or not, consider the aesthetic but also pros and cons regarding:

- >> **PROTECTION** The glass can be very important to preserve your artwork
- >> **REFLECTIONS** Consider glare-free glass
- >> **SHARPNESS AND DETAILS** Different glass has different quality
- >> **ALTERNATIVES TO GLASS** E.g. lamination, and plexiglass without a frame

TIP!

Keep in mind that if something is attached upon the image itself, such as a laminate or plexiglass, you do an alteration to the image itself. If you have purchased photographic art, this alteration may affect the image value. Take this into consideration before you make your choice!

4

Why a mat?

To frame an image with a mat is a common choice. A mat is a piece of board with a cut-out window, through which the photograph is viewed. The function of a mat is to give the image some distance to the frame, affects the impression of the artwork and can help to accentuate the image. In addition to pure aesthetics, it works as a preventer for the image to come in contact with the glass.

EXPRESSION Some think a mat is a classic choice and simply belongs on art, while some avoids it, with the argumen to seek a contemporary feel. Some images fit better with, and some better without. There is nothing that says you have to have a mat or not. It is entirely up to you and what you want your artwork to express.

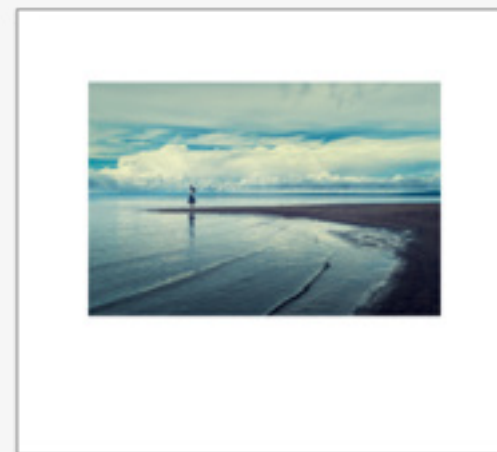
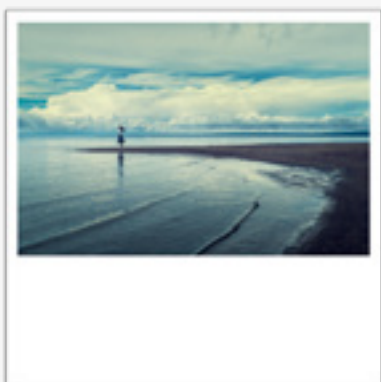
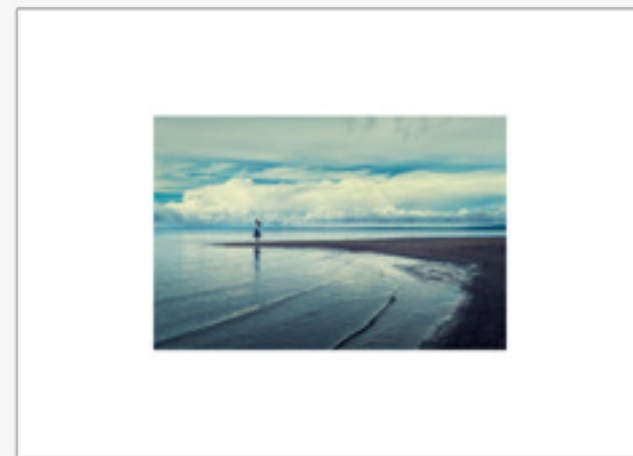
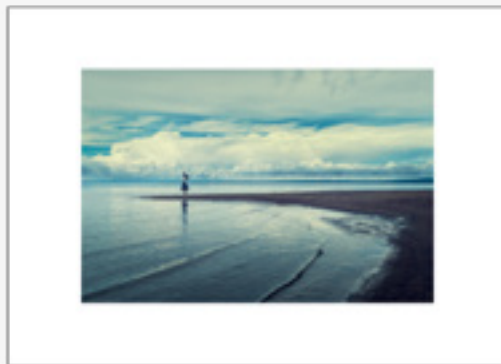
SIZE Some prefers a narrow mat, some a really wide one. Some images can suit better with a narrow mat, some with a wider one. On the next page you will find examples of different shapes and sizes of the mat. What is your preference?

A mat is also increasing the artwork size so that the size of the full piece often appears to be bigger, which can be both good and bad. The effect of expanding the overall experience of the size can of course be used, if you do not have a big image but would like to have an impressive piece on the wall. If so, consider a wide mat. However, do not choose a mat too wide, making your artwork too big or so that it feels over-dimensioned for your wall! Also consider that a too wide mat also can have the opposite effect, giving you the feeling or engulfing the image.

COLOR Another choice is the color of the mat and the most common ones are probably fairly neutral (usually white or off-white, but also gray, or black). The same applies here as with choice of frame; do you want the framing to be what makes the greatest impression or do you want the image to be it?

TIP!

Keep in mind that the mat must be acid-free so that the image will not be discolored!



The blue lake
With different mat sizes and format. What appeals you the most?



ADDITIONAL TIPS The [art prints](#) I offer of my photos come with a 5 cm white paper border around it (not printed paper). Total external dimension of e.g. a 75x50 cm photo is 85x60 cm with this white border.

This border is good to have in case you want to frame the image with a mat, because then you need some margin of the paper that you can attach to the back of the mat without cropping into the picture.

Many also find this white paper border aesthetically appealing instead of a mat made out of cardboard, and therefore keeps it and frames the image accordingly. For those who do not want this border, it can of course be cut off.



White paper border around my art prints for attaching or as a mat.

SUMMERY MAT

For choices around a mat, consider:

- >> **EXPRESSION** To use a mat or not can give a completely different expression of the artwork
- >> **SIZE** A mat affects both the look and size of the whole piece
- >> **COLOR** What suits best together with your image and the complete art piece?

5

Outsource or frame yourself

In addition to determining what the piece should look like and what features it should have, you are to make a choice whether to buy a frame alt make your own and frame yourself, or if you want to outsource to a framer who does everything for you. It can be great fun to frame yourself and give a creative outlet. Do not forget though to think about preservation of your image. And as always, economy.

To frame an image can be fun and rewarding. It can also be considered to be a professional craft, and depending on what your priority is, a well mounted and framed image by an expert can be a wise decision (if you do not know the art of framing yourself). A framer usually does so much more than just putting an image in a frame and place clips on the back. The image should perhaps be attached to a back board so that it hangs flat and straight without curling. Or it should hang freely behind a mat. Or there should be spacers installed inside the framework for various visual effects. It may be important to seal the artwork well to prevent dust from entering into the framed art piece. It is also important that all materials are completely acid free and that is true for all materials used, e.g. mat, tape, back board, sealing tape, etc. If you are unsure about any decision, ask your framer what the pros and cons are for your image. In addition, you can get more help and advice about the aesthetic choices you have to do!



Untitled, 2011

6

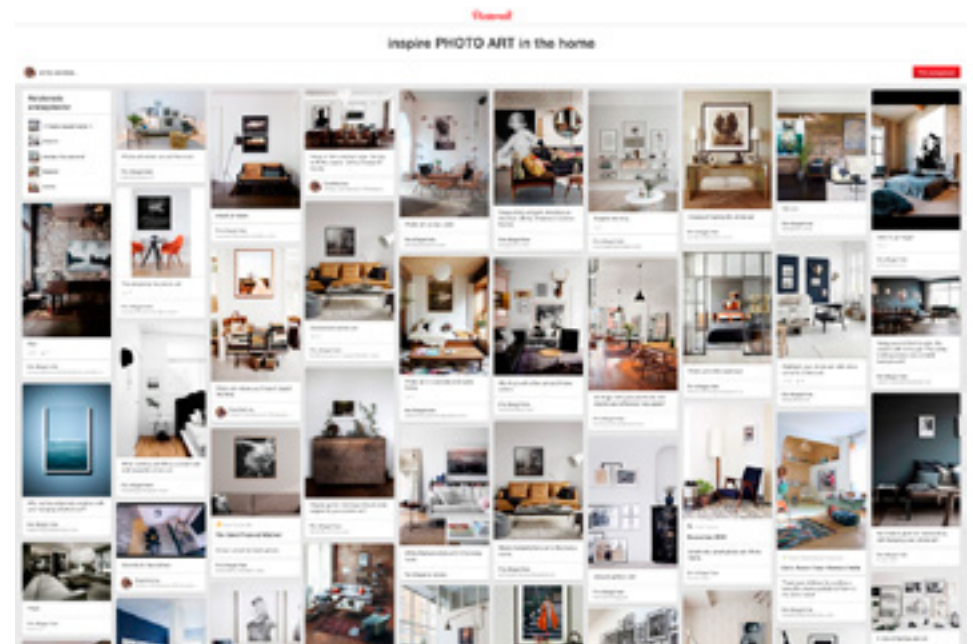
Placement

The tips about placement of photo art on the wall are endless and sometimes quite contradictory. The reason is that everyone has a different starting point for how to view images and art. In addition, everyone has different taste ... So, what do you do?

Some prefer to keep all their art aligned at the bottom, some at the top. Some recommend that you align at the center of the art piece, others that no rules should be followed at all ... Some say you should hang at eye level, but a little lower e.g. above a sofa where you sit, and in the next breath all rules should be broken and the image can be placed directly on the floor. If you have a gallery or a museum as a reference for how you want to hang, you can have a completely different opinion than someone who wants to create an intimate and cozy home. And for that reason I will actually not give exact advice at all about “how” you should hang your photos ...

...**HOWEVER**, I advice you to look around! In other people’s homes, in interior design magazines, galleries, exhibitions, or why not online? I believe that when you see what you like in different hangings, then you know what you should focus on for your own artwork. Never mind that “should”, and focus instead on what appeals to you.

To get you started, I've created a [moodboard on my Pinterest, where I continuously add various images I find of photo art in the home](#) so that you directly can go and have a look and get started. You will also find inspiration for frame colors, sizes, with or without mats, etc. So take a look and have fun along the way!



Lastly

Dare to try! If you do not make permanent changes to your image you can always change in the future. And add your personal touch, because hopefully you have an image that speaks of you, your personal journey, or something that inspires you deeply. So make sure you also frame and hang your photo art so that it reflects YOU!

Jenny Jacobsson is a professional photographer from Sweden, specializing in conceptual portraits for commercial use, for individuals and their homes, and photo art. Narrative, expressive and emotional images where the viewer feels that the impossible is possible has become her hallmark. With her personal style and unique image concepts her work has won international awards and Jenny is also engaged as a lecturer and freelance teacher.



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