

TRENDING GIFTS — HOME



GreenBox Art offers both large-scale art pieces as well as smaller framed and canvas art used to create gallery walls. greenboxart.com

WALL DÉCOR IN FOCUS

Eye-level home décor can create a relaxing atmosphere or a bold statement — both sides of the spectrum are on trend this year.

by ANNE-MARIE EARL

Living through a pandemic has changed the way U.S. consumers do just about anything. People have shifted from working in the office to working remotely, from spending on experiences to buying new products, from shopping in person to online and from traveling to refocusing on the home. And staying home for close to a year has given consumers plenty of time to analyze their spaces and consider a refresh.

In May 2020, Sullivans conducted a nationwide consumer research study to better understand how shoppers purchase home décor and if COVID-19 would affect future behavior. In the 2020 Home Décor Consumer Survey, Sullivans found that 36 percent of consumers purchased home décor during an uncertain economy and shortage of household necessities, and 65 percent of consumers planned to purchase home décor once social restrictions loosened. The reasoning? To improve emotional wellbeing and fill a functional purpose. If that doesn't explain the needs of U.S. consumers over the last year!

Ellen Fruchtmann, PR director for Mud Pie, noted, "The walls have literally closed in on us this past year. What once felt comfy now looks weary. Home décor is a perfect way to freshen up any

space without breaking the bank — no renovation required."

Those looking to brighten a mood and make a space more functional can do so with wall art, a category *Gifts & Decorative Accessories* has noted as an up and coming category for 2021. Wall art has the ability to set the tone of a room, creating a happy retreat, a calming sanctuary and everything in between.

SETTING THE MOOD

Wall art is typically hung at eye level and is often the first thing seen upon entering a room, giving it the ability to transform a space better than most other home décor. Because it can be such a focal point, consumers are likely to display art that makes them feel positive, calm, relaxed and content.

"Wall art can spark conversation and transform a room entirely through the imagery, colors and textures found in the piece," explained Karen Capp, co-founder of GreenBox Art. "Whether a painting or drawing makes you smile, evokes a feeling of comfort or takes you to a place you'd like to go, the imagery should make you feel."

Inspirational designs and those that convey positivity

continue to be popular go-to trends in home décor, according to Lynette Cvikota, VP of product development for Tag, as consumers continue to search for items that combat negative news that is so prevalent during this uncertain time. “Live, Laugh, Love” decals might be a thing of the past, but other calming mantras, such as reminders to breathe or of the resiliency of the human spirit, are trending upward. Favorite scripture or lyrics also continue to remain popular.

ADDING TEXTURE

Because most people don't touch wall décor, it's easy to dismiss how it can soften a space — or create interest — with texture. “Texture has become as important as color in home décor, and wall art reflects this same interest in texture,” Cvikota explained. From brush strokes on canvas to paper with torn edges to hanging baskets with a thick weave, texture can create a tactile experience without ever having to touch. “Natural woods and textiles with soft and washed textures add depth to a light and airy room — canvas wall art, botanical line drawings and muted colors will add to that feeling of lightness. Natural materials, stone, found objects and books stacked add interest as well,” Cvikota continued.

Tactile wall art trending for 2021 is broad sweeping, including framed art printed on high-quality paper, canvas hung from its grommets, raw wood and steel organizational shelving and even macramé, on a smaller scale. Combined with other textures in a room, from upholstery to throws and pillows, texture can tell the story of a room.

NEUTRAL OR BOLD?

Pantone's colors of the year for 2021 are Ultimate Gray, a warm and practical neutral, and Illuminating, a cheery yellow. On the Color Institute's website, the company notes: “A message of happiness supported by fortitude, the combination of Ultimate Gray and Illuminating is aspirational and gives us hope. We need to feel that everything is going to get brighter — this is essential to the human spirit.” These colors — and really the idea behind them — will certainly be trending in wall décor this year and beyond.

“As more customers look to create their home hub as a sanctuary, they are looking for grounded colors,” said Laurie Gilner, president and CEO of Transpac and Totalee Gift. “Earth tones such as clay, evergreen and indigo, as well as natural core colors like gray, ivory and black were all seen to be leaders in the home décor color choices.”

Nathan Skrove, VP of product development for Sullivans, agreed. “Overall by far, consumers are looking for subdued neutrals that provide a sense of serenity and comfort. Hues of beige, taupe and browns accented with hits of soft pastels or gray tones are resonating in today's home. Gray is also very important in today's home,” Skrove said.

Conversely, some consumers will turn the other way, moving from subdued tones to happier ones. “Color is more important than ever to uplift the mood in the room,” Capp said. “The brighter the better is what we find; blues, aquas and teals in particular gain continuous attention.”

Tawni Buhler, marketing director for Sullivans, noted, “Though our customers are drawn to neutrals, wall décor is a great opportunity to add a pop of color while maintaining their overall aesthetic.”

HomArt, another home décor company within the gift industry, offers a primarily neutral palette, but its bolder black-and-white patterns create a strong statement and pairs well with a colorful accent.



Wall art from HomArt is mostly made of neutrals in natural materials, designed to add texture and often functionality to a space. homart.com



Messages of positivity remain popular in wall art, displayed in neutrals that can blend in with existing home décor. [Mud Pie. wholesale.mudpie.com](http://wholesale.mudpie.com)



Choosing serene landscapes in soothing colors can set a comfortable and relaxing tone. [Sullivans. sullivangift.com](http://sullivangift.com)

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BEAUTY AND FUNCTION

Spending an unprecedented amount of time at home for most in the U.S. has led to utilizing rooms in new ways that require some rethinking of how the spaces function from day to day.

"I feel that the added time at home has made us more mindful of how spaces need to function," said Julia Long-Adams, creative director for HomArt. "A kitchen table might now also be where home schooling happens or that corner of the living room has turned into a home office. Function and comfort have become foremost priorities."

"Some wall art can complement existing room décor through functionality," added Gilner. "We have seen great response to our functional pieces that have unfinished natural wood and black iron, as they can coordinate with many different styles."

Beyond standard shelving, many gift companies are offering artistic pieces that display everyday items in a way that make them feel more important. "Wall shelves that are almost sculptural in form have been very popular for us," Long-Adams noted.

Other functional wall pieces include woven baskets for hiding objects that are better left tucked away, such as remotes, note pads and other odds and ends; shelving with compartments or drawers; and shelving that has an organizational component for mail or office necessities. But not all organizational décor is designed to hide everyday messes.

Fruchtman said she recently hung up a gallery of cutting boards in her kitchen, storing objects she intends to use in plain sight. This same approach can be done with artistic serveware, family recipes, textiles and more.

Mirrors are maybe the most common functional wall décor item; however mirrors in 2021 are coming with a twist. In Transpac, HomArt, Mud Pie and P. Graham Dunn's product assortments shown at the Atlanta Market, round and oval mirrors framed with wooden beads were popular new items.

Wall art is an easy investment for consumers to change the look and feel of a space. For gift retailers new to this category, Stephanie Medina of GreenBox Art recommends starting small. "For retail shops, the mini framed art can help them test out new artists to see which pieces customers gravitate to before committing to carry larger sizes of wall art by the same artist," Medina said. In store, consider creating a "high-impact welcome" by



Prints on textured canvas or high-quality paper have the ability to soften a space. Tag, tagltd.com



Wall organizers keep necessities neat and on full display, ideal for mixed-use spaces that have had to transform into home offices. Transpac. shoptii.com

selecting three to five pieces of larger canvas wall art to set the tone, while merchandising nearby tables and shelves by popular artists or themes with complementary gift items and playful accessories that pair well together. 🍷



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