

Decor Score: The eye craves a little organization in every wall arrangement

by *Rose_Bennett_Gilbert*

Q: At the moment, our bed is up against a blank bedroom wall in our new house. Where we used to live, there was a window over the head of the bed and I used curtains on the wall.

HANGING AROUND - When designing a wall arrangement, work out your items on the floor or bed before you start hanging. Also, remember the eye craves some organization, so you should try to establish at least one horizontal alignment within the arrangement. CNS Photo. I'm thinking of making a picture arrangement, but am not sure what to hang and how.

A: A successful picture arrangement can include almost anything that appeals to you, like photographs, works of art, decorative plates, mirrors, even small sculptures and pedestals to hold objects.

About framing, there are two different schools of thought: If the display items are alike or similar in size and shape, you may want to have them all framed to match. Hung close together, with, say, no more than 2 inches between frames, they can make an almost architectural statement on the wall behind your bed. The alternative approach would be to gather together the kind of assortment we've just discussed and compose it into an interesting arrangement.

The picture wall in the photo we show here should provide inspiration. It's the bedroom Muriel Brandolini and her husband share in Upper East Side New York City, and it's a charming testimony to Muriel's unfettered approach to decorating. She's very into textiles - her study walls are upholstered in deep blue corduroy, for example. She also believes in constantly changing her decor, and in mixing many different things, whatever appeals "right now," she says. "Before was right for before," Muriel told the editors of Elle Decor magazine (we borrowed this photo from a new book, "So Chic," by Margaret Russell and the editors of Elle Decor).

As any bedroom wall is for family viewing mainly, I suggest that you can relax, have fun, and adopt Muriel's freewheeling attitude. Here, for example, her wall arrangement mix includes a drawing by New York designer Van Day Truex, framed panels of gold embroidery and religious icons.

Ending on a practical note: work out your arrangement on the floor or bed before you start hanging. That way you can adjust the overall proportions and establish a sense of balance. Remember as you go that dark frames and colors "weigh" more than light objects and should be evenly distributed. Also, the eye craves some organization, so you should try to establish at least one horizontal alignment within the arrangement.

Q: I grew up in a house with a grandfather's clock and always remember how safe and secure its ticking and chiming made me feel. The trouble is, my husband is totally untraditional. I know he'd hate the kind of grandfather's clock I remember so fondly. What do you do when you can't agree on decorating styles?

A: What you didn't tell me is how long you've been living in this divided camp? Given time (and two pairs of kid gloves), differences of opinion can usually be worked through, whether they're about raising children, voting political parties or choosing the elements in your living environment. I speak from experience, having been married to an architect of the International School, who only loved the great unadorned and believed in all colors, as long as they were white, black or beige.

Differences of opinion need not lead to domestic war. Compromise is key. Look for new takes on traditional ideas that will appeal to both your tastes. For example, you can easily have your grandfather's clock and a tranquil home, too: check out some of the very new ideas in "old-fashioned" tall clocks offered by manufacturers like Howard Miller (www.howardmiller.com). They even make a fountain clock, which has water cascading down a natural slate tower behind the clock's face. It's not only good feng shui, that trickling water, but there's even a gently swinging pendulum to remind you of your childhood.

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