

Your Wall Art Placement

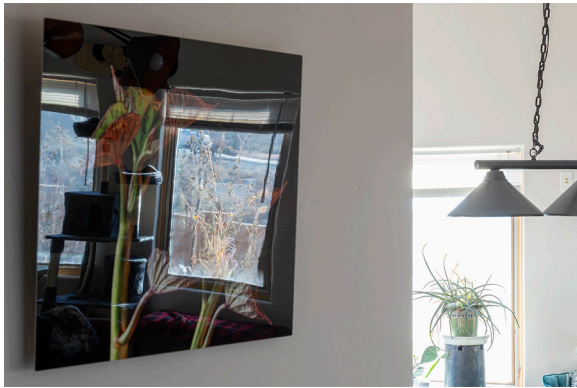
The seemingly obvious but often overlooked details of optimal lighting and visibility

Why Placement Matters

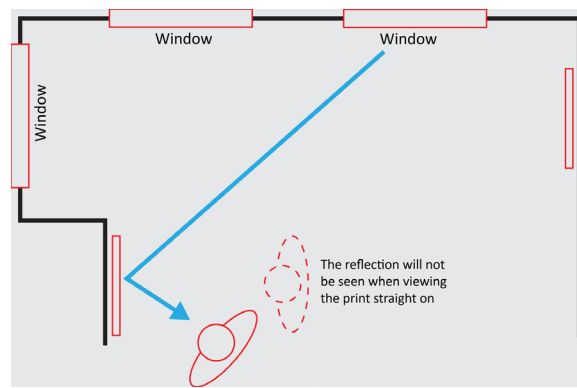
The purpose of this guide is to help you start looking at the lighting in a room from a photographer's point of view when you are evaluating placement of wall art. The idea is to optimize the visibility of the art. Optimizing visibility is not difficult. It just takes a bit of understanding of the reflectance behavior of various media, a basic understanding of lighting, and some observation and consideration of the lighting effects of available placements while you move around the room.

With regard to setting the mood of a room, wall art is as important as furniture. Wall art also gives you almost infinite options on subject, size, color, etc. Properly displayed, it will enhance the mood and theme of the room. Subject matter in the art can create emotions, tell a story or depict an activity, but if the placement of the art is disrupted by reflections and/or poor lighting, the whole purpose and function of the wall art is lost.

You walk into a room and quickly look around. A metal print is hanging on the left wall. A bright window on the adjacent wall is reflected off the print surface, making it difficult to see the image in the print. What is the point of spending money on wall art that is barely even visible? We have all become so accustomed to seeing poorly placed wall art that we often just move around trying to see it better without a second thought. No matter how perfect the aesthetics of the print may be, if reflections make it hard to see, it's message and impact are for naught.



Reflection of adjacent window in the print

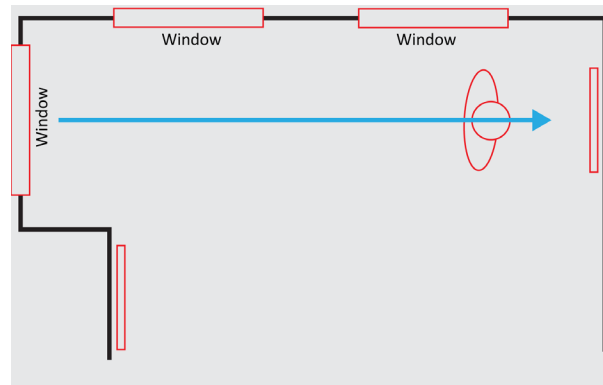


Angle of incidence = angle reflected

Keep in mind that the angle of incidence = the angle reflected, as shown in the illustration above. Consider where the viewers will be positioned to determine whether or not there will be an issue in proposed locations for the wall art. These two examples are shown with high gloss metal prints. Semi-gloss stretched canvas and textured semi-gloss paper will have different reflective properties. Coldpress matte fine art paper has almost no reflections at all. See below for details of reflections with various media types.



Reflection of window on the opposite wall

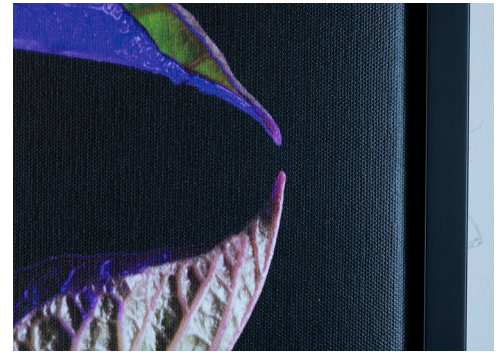


The glossy surfaces of glass covered and metal prints reflect light very efficiently, like a mirror. The reflection is often as bright as the image in the print. Non-glare glass diffuses (blurs) the reflections to make the print image a little more visible, at the expense of lightening the dark areas. Canvas with a semi-gloss finish reflects an overall sheen on the print, similar to non-glare glass. A matte paper surface will not reflect much, if any, of the light from the light sources in a room, but it sacrifices contrast and saturation. Artificial lighting can be positioned overhead or on walls or furniture, which can give you more options in finding good placement for wall art. All this works together to give you options and control in displaying prints in a variety of room and lighting conditions.

Here are some details:



Stretched canvas with a semi-gloss finish is a versatile media that is comfortable in most lighting conditions. Even with overall diffuse room lighting, blacks are not quite as deep as in other media but direct reflection of room light sources is subtle. The lightly textured surface creates an overall sheen, lightening the darker areas of the image.



A close up view with side lighting shows how the light reflects off the surface at different angles as the canvas wraps around the rounded outer edges of the stretcher bars, creating a finishing touch that accents the outer frame.



An aluminum metal print delivers saturated color and deep, accent blacks. The high gloss, mirror-like surface adds a glamorous finishing touch. This photo depicts a metal print in "perfect" room lighting, which in essence is a darkened room with only direct side lighting on the print. Of course, this is not a realistic depiction of a metal print in a typical home or office interior.



This photo is more realistic regarding how a metal print appears in a real room environment. The high gloss finish mirrors the room in the background, even with dimly lit rooms. We are all accustomed to reflections coming from glass covered and reflective metal prints. Our brains recognize the accent black background, even though a reflection interferes with it.

A third media is the perhaps underrated Coldpress Fine Art Paper media.* This is a 100% cotton rag 21 mil heavy weight media. Some may consider a paper print inadequate for fine art imaging, but in a real world environment, this coldpress media turns out to be the most compatible, image quality preserving media available. The matte finish maintains black density regardless of direct or indirect lighting. It simply does not reflect, so you can place it anywhere. It also happens to be less expensive than canvas and metal in medium to large size prints.



A low key composition printed on Coldpress Fine Art paper media can be placed anywhere. The matte surface does not reflect room lighting and maintains dense blacks in the image. Color is saturated, especially when spot lighting is placed on the print.

*The paper media used in OpusStuf prints

Side by Side Comparison

Always consider room lighting, media and placement when shopping for wall art. Even though it looks great on your screen while shopping, the end result when it's hanging on the wall may be a surprise. Here are side by side comparisons of a direct reflection from a window in an adjacent room.



Coldpress Fine Art paper



Semi-gloss canvas stretched & framed



Aluminum metal print

NOTE: The AI-based apps that create previews by placing an image in your photo do not include the effects of room lighting, reflections and placement. The problem with reflections and glare is the same as what you will see with flat screen televisions with bright windows in the room.

High Key and Low Key Images

In glossy and semi-gloss media, reflections are most noticeable in the darker and black areas in the printed image. The images presented above are all Low Key compositions to make obvious examples of reflections and glare.

Low Key refers to compositions with large background areas of very dark or black space, commonly depicting thoughtful, or dramatic content. When you are looking for the drama of a Low Key image, you should also consider media, placement and lighting options in the selection process because a deep black is crucial to enhance the drama of the composition.

High Key refers to compositions with large backgrounds of white or light colors, with medium to light colored subjects and light-hearted content.

Evaluating Room Light Sources

When you are evaluating various wall art placements, look for potential reflection issues by moving around and identifying light sources that are likely to reflect in the prints. Consider the typical position where viewers will stand or sit to observe an art piece. Open blinds and drapes, turn on lights in the room and look to see whether or not any of these light sources will create reflections or glare in the typical viewing positions.

Windows

Sunlight coming through windows in daytime is often much brighter than the room lighting, which causes our eyes to adjust for the brightness. Wall art hanging next to a bright window is hard to see unless you move in close to it. Bright windows are also the source of strong reflections and glare in wall hanging prints. Check for windows at the right angle to be reflected in wall prints. If there is no good place for the wall prints, consider using a matte surface print media.

Overhead Lighting

Overhead lighting generally provides an even, room-filling light that is suited to office and work areas. Lacking the drama of light direction and shadows, it is more functional than attractive. Depending on the ceiling height, the light fixtures themselves can be reflected and visible in a glossy and semi-gloss prints. In spite of being a bit sterile, overhead lighting does not typically create many problems with wall hanging artwork.

Lamps and bare bulbs

Obviously, the variety of types and sizes of lamps, and the fact that they are easy to move around, makes them good candidates for compatible room lighting with wall art. Lampshades and reflectors help direct the light output as needed. It is generally not a good idea to place a bright omni-directional lamp next to a wall art piece as it has the same effect as a window in daylight hours. Our eyes adjust to the brightness of the lamp and darken the visibility of the artwork.

Spotlights

Spotlights placed above wall art work well for illuminating wall prints. This will project the shadow below the print, which is usually not bothersome or distracting. Deep, multi-level frames, however, can cast a shadow onto the print, so the spotlight will need to be positioned out from the wall. Spotlight accents in a room attract immediate attention and add a gallery-like atmosphere.

Conclusion

In setting the character of a room, wall art is as important or even more important than furniture. Furniture such as select antiques may have a history, but good wall art can tell a story and trigger an emotional response in the viewer. This combined with complementary paint colors and other furnishings establishes a solid character in the room. Coordinating all this can be considered an art form.

Check out the offerings on www.opusstuf.com. Enhanced photographic and hand-drawn graphics offer a variety of styles, subjects and media to work well in home and office environments.