

Photo art lets you decorate for high impact, low cost

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For the Associated Press

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One of the hottest trends in home decor is hanging photographic art, which can make a big impact without costing a lot.

Flip through the pages of any home magazine to see examples of arresting imagery, in color and black and white, of streetscapes, landscapes, portraits and still lifes.

"Photo art brings in elements of energy, atmosphere and emotion," says designer Thom Felicia, one of many designers and retailers who are championing the form.

One place to check out new directions in photo art is Artspan.com, a website featuring contemporary artists. Photographer Irene Andreadis of Huntington, N.Y., did a striking series of shots, featured on the site, of an old train car abandoned in the woods. Her lush, color-saturated shots of flowers also caught the eye of Tiffany's store decorators, who bought several orchid photos.

Kim Curinga, a photographer based in Eighty Four, Pa., shot a series of feline portraits, manipulated in Photoshop to look like pop art.

The images, also on Artspan.com, have a fun, modern art vibe.

She's also captured a beautiful group of Yosemite images, evocative of Ansel Adams' work.

"Three of these, 5-feet-tall and framed, hang in my home. I print things large -- they're more dramatic," she says.

New Yorker Jen Bekman started 20x200.com in 2007. As she sees it, "there are a lot of

people out there who want to sell their art and a lot of people who'd like to buy it. They just have a hard time finding each other."

The name came from the initial concept, which was to offer limited editions of 200 of each art piece, priced at \$20. The site now offers a broader range of sizes and prices.

If you're new to photo art, how should you decide what to buy?

"Start with prints and art books," Bekman says. "It's a great way to figure out what you like. Don't be shy about orienting yourself through something that already interests you: animals, sports, books, nature or even a specific color."

Inexpensive photo art posters and some limited editions can also be found on sites like Art.com and Allposters.com. Organized by subject, each site offers work by many famous photographers. Vintage portraits including Darwin, Edward VIII and old sporting photos can be found on Art.com.

The New York Times recently invited Jonathan Adler, Kelly Wearstler, Thom Felicia, Laura Kirar and Vicente Wolf to explore the paper's photo archives; their favorites can now be purchased online at NYTimes.com. Prices start at \$199.

Images picked by Felicia include a group of young

The Mercury News

MercuryNews.com

swimmers on a summer dock. "I love how the photographer captures the composition of sky, clouds, and the sliver of land and water.

This image evokes an appreciation of friendship to me, and our connection with nature. It creatively (elevates) what could be a typical landscape, and personifies much of what I love in photography."

Wolf's group of black-and-white images includes Eddie Hausner's photographs of 1950s urban life, Gary Knight's portrait of a geisha, and Todd Heisler's evocative photo of a silhouetted umbrella holder near Central Park's Bethesda Fountain.

Bekman's final word of advice: "Buy art that you love. That's my first and last rule of collecting."