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# A gift for your wall

## Gifting art as a wedding or birthday present instead of a bouquet is finding takers. Is the 'beauty' market ready to invade homes?

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If you feel you're done with gifting large bouquets at birthday and wedding parties and are looking at giving something that is equally beautiful and 'stays' longer, you probably know where you should head for. If not, there are those who're willing to give you the cue. An increasing number of city art lovers have turned towards investing in art, we know. Now, there are many more who're looking at gifting art - and no, it doesn't have to be big names like M F Husain, S H Raza, Manjit Bawa or V S Gaitonde serigraphs (if originals seem too far-fetched, that is).

Amdavadis are fast turning towards giving 'meaningful' gifts, those that last not only in memory but also in reality. And, gifting art (besides it turning affordable) is also one of the best ways to ensure the gift is treasured, and put up on the walls for posterity.

We have been buying art of artists like Kakuli Sen, Manoj Kachangal, as well as Gujarat-based artists; we take serigraphs more as gifts for friends, be it for house-warming or for birthday parties. It's a good way to keep the emotion and value of a gift alive," says Vasa, who enjoys visiting art exhibitions at galleries in the city.

Art collector Anil Relia has an interesting bit to share on gifting art. It was prevalent even 50 years ago when colour printing began, he shares. "Kanu Desai, Somalal Shah, Ravishankar Raval were artists during the time. Kanu Desai had even designed a portfolio as a wedding gift. It was priced 2, 4 and 6 ammas... he called it Dampatya Jeevan ke Anuroop and it was very popular. In fact, for my wedding I too got three to four such portfolios. While gifting art was about good wishes then, it is more about investment now. Instead of a silver coin, people are now choosing to gift a painting.

The 'shift in gift' trend is gaining prominence, slowly but surely. Also, it's not just art collectors who are interested in purchasing art. People are gifting artworks as wedding gifts, at house-warming parties, office openings, birthdays, even as souvenirs to friends abroad. Interestingly, they are also being given as return gifts. The range isn't quite chalked out; it is more to do with individual pockets looking at purchasing and the occasions these are meant for. Serigraphs and artworks could range from as little as Rs 400 and could go up to whatever number of zeros you wish to add to it.

"Contrary to what many may assume, people are not interested in big names alone. We have people asking for limited edition serigraphs of masters, up and coming artists as well as original paintings of budding artists. They concern themselves with nice, pleasing art that is high on aesthetics and concept, of course suiting the need and appropriate

budget," says Dhanvi Shah of Marvel Art Gallery.

Investing in young, up and coming artists is more viable for those recently venturing into buying 'beauties' for the walls. CEPT University Professor Dinesh Mehta enjoys being able to afford young, Ahmedabad-based artists' works. He has been collecting art, "like Harshil Patel's works that are a visual treat". For his son's wedding two years ago, Mehta instead of giving out the usual boxes of sweets and *mithai*, gifted Haku Shah's serigraphs to all those invited for the occasion.

"The box of *mithais* would have been consumed and forgotten. The cost of *mithai* and chocolates would be as much and so why not gift people something we love and something they'll enjoy watching in years to come, I thought. People loved it and now it feels good when we see those serigraphs in homes we visit," says Prof Mehta, following it up with an afterthought, "I am not sure if the trend of investing in art is recent but the trend of having affordable art at homes is surely getting popular."

Another art enthusiast, Rajan Vasa, managing director of Contech BPO Services, feels art as investment has been around and drawing interest for a while but "lately there has been a realisation about the value of art".

"Art appreciation has converted into art recognition, perhaps owing to Sotheby's, Christie's, Saffron Arts... People have been collecting art but the realisation of the appreciation of the investment will get noticed only after some decades. That's why people like us look at art for long-term investment and enjoyment.



It's a growing trend to gift art on different occasions, and why not? It's an investment that needn't be locked up in the bank safe...you can safely enjoy it around you all the time!

CHAITYA SHAH  
Art curator

The good aspect is that an art piece has a memory attached; however, it may take long, sometimes a generation, too, for value to grow. I remember Ravi Varma oleographs were available for Re 1 *amma* a dozen and now those prints are worth Rs 2000 each!" says Relia.

"The young generation also picks up art as gifts. Some time back I had someone ask me for Husain's Kerala series, much to my curiosity. They said they wanted to gift one to a couple who was heading for Kerala for their honeymoon; and guess what, they ended up taking one with a boat because they were to stay in a boat there," adds Relia.

While gifting art is a desirable option, it is not always the investment angle that appeals. Advocate Urvashi Shodhan, for instance, would gift art primarily because it pleases the eye. "It cannot be just about 'appreciation' of the art piece. It has to please the eye. If it is work of a known artist, well and good; if not it's still okay. I don't much study how much the art will appreciate; for me it has to give joy. When I went to Australia I gifted a painting to my nephew who had just moved into a new house. Before leaving from here, I'd sent him four options of paintings and he chose from those. It wasn't just



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Advocate

about finishing off with gifting something for the new house, it was about adding a touch of beauty to it," reasons Shodhan.

Gifting art is getting to be an "easier" option also because of the "beauty factor". Gallery owners also suggest art patrons to gift a piece of art instead of bouquets. "The younger generation is also quite aware about art. They may not have big money but do consider going in for serigraphs for gifting purposes. Frankly, it is not just a financial investment, it is also a visual investment. Who doesn't want to see good colours, design and positive thoughts on canvas?" asks Nayana

Soparkar of Mantra Art Gallery. Particularly enthused by art taking on the world around, she says: "People are seeing art at friends' and neighbours' homes and it interests them enough to own and gift some as well."

Like art curator Chaitya Shah reasons, "It's a growing trend to gift art on different occasions, and why not? The art will appreciate, it enhances home decor, has a cultural significance, has good return in long term and most of all, it's an investment that needn't be locked up in the bank safe...you can safely enjoy it around you all the time!"



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ANIL RELIA  
Art entrepreneur



For my son's wedding, instead of giving out the usual box of sweets and mithais, my wife Meera and I gifted Haku Shah's serigraphs to those invited for the occasion.

DINESH MEHTA  
Professor, CEPT

*Gift art*

*Make a difference*

