

Gabe's December House Calls



Should you match the art to the sofa?

It's a maxim among creative types and a bit of an insult: Don't match the art to the couch.

Evidently, if you do, you've made a low-brow choice.

But, interesting. You might notice that in every photo of great art on a great wall, everything seems to fit. Dare we say everything, including the couch, matches?

Yes it does, and it's a strategy.

In fact, art usually matches the couch and great paintings are actually not thrown haphazardly onto a wall in utter disregard for their surroundings

Art and design expert Kristie Barnett incorporates psychology and decor into her spaces and she writes in her blog, the Decorologist, that it is an insult to the art and the room not to consider size, shape, and colors.

But the key is that one may inspire the other. If you find a deeply moving painting, that can inspire the decor of the whole room. So you are really matching the couch to the art, which may be give some people comfort.

Or, if you love a color and you find that color in a painting that makes you happy, it may well match the walls -- or the couch -- because what you like is how you live. So be inspired!

Living nativities demand camels

When it comes to living nativity scenes, nothing makes a splash like a camel.

Yes, you have your sheep, and they are fluffy and warm when it is cold outside. They definitely have a place at the manger because the angels appeared to the lowly shepherds. You have the donkey, which is comic relief, and also Mary and Joseph had to get to Bethlehem some way and they probably parked their camel at the manger.

But nothing welcomes the newborn baby Jesus more than the camel. The camel's size, majesty and innate dignity make it a star attraction.

Camels have been part of Christmas for hundreds of years.

Even the first president George Washington rented a camel for the Mount Vernon Christmas party in 1787. He paid 18 shillings, about \$900 in today's money.

In Egypt, Baba Noel (Father Christmas), a fat man in a red suit with a white beard, can sometimes be seen near Cairo shopping districts riding -- of course -- a camel, bedecked in carpets and dangling balls, according to the Washington Post.

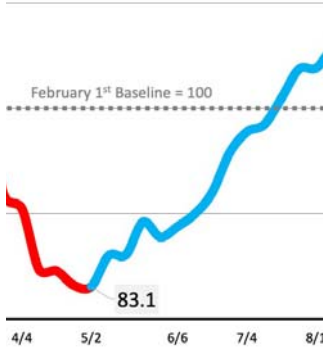
Nothing in the Bible tells us about a camel at the manger, but throughout the centuries, people assumed there must have been one because of the Wise Men.

The Bible says the Wise Men, sometimes depicted as kings, came from the east following a star. They gave the baby Jesus three gifts: Gold, the treasure of a king; frankincense, a fragrant resin used for perfume and offerings to God; and myrrh, a resin used for fragrance, medicine and even embalming, according to Christianity Today.

The gifts from the Wise Men were expensive and only available on the Arabian peninsula or Africa. Therefore, people figured the Wise Men arrived on camels: Three gifts, from three Wise Men, on three camels. That's how it has worked out in common lore, but every piece of that can and has been disputed.

The one thing we know about the Wise Men from the Bible is that they weren't snitches. The evil King Herod wanted the Wise Men to report to him when they had found the baby Jesus. But the Wise Men were way too wise for that. With the dignity of their silent camels, they found Jesus, then snubbed the king and slipped away





Ask the Expert

We want to buy a house, but we have heard home prices are very high. Will prices come down in 2022?

No one can predict the future, but analysts continue to say home prices will stay high, and probably rise higher in 2022.

It's a great time to sell a home, with prices up 20 percent nationally.

To understand this, consider the principle of supply and demand.

When people want to buy houses, that is called demand. When there are houses to sell, that is called supply. Prices are currently high because there are lots of people who want to buy houses and not enough houses for sale. So supply of houses is low compared to demand.

What happens then is that buyers offer high prices for the houses that are available and sellers also ask higher prices. If there were more houses for sale, prices could go down, especially at the current affordable interest rates on mortgages.

But many things affect this supply and demand tradeoff.

In the current market, one reason for low supply is that the home building industry has been unable to build as many homes as they could sell. They can't get the building materials and they are short of workers. Ac-

Your House May Show Well At Christmas!

Family, cheer, warmth -- these are some of the memories and feelings the holidays conjure up and they are, not coincidentally, the best possible feelings to create when showing your home.

Holidays offer the seller so many options for making a home perfect for the buyer: Special lights, holiday smells, cozy fireplaces and festive decorations.

Remember, though, the motto for sellers is: Stay simple.

*Use modest lighting and decorations inside and out.

*If you have a Christmas tree, consider buying one size smaller than you usually buy. Arrange a few simple gifts with matching wrapping paper under the tree. Make sure there is no extravagant display of gifts or toys under the tree. Store away any furniture that is displaced by the tree.

- For all decorations, small and simple is better.



*Favor natural materials such as real pine branches and pine cones for wreaths and other decorations, and shun plastics or bright, big decorations. Avoid inflatable decorations outside.

* Decorate your home with fragrance. Bake bread or cookies. If this is impossible, try light holiday fragrances such as vanilla or cinnamon. Avoid heavy pine smells.

* Clean your fireplace thoroughly and make sure a small, crackling fire is going during walk-throughs. But pay special attention to the temperature of your home. Make sure the home is lightly warm, not so toasty that potential buyers can't stand to wear their coats.

* Make sure all your window blinds and curtains are open for day showings. This means the windows themselves must be perfectly clean.

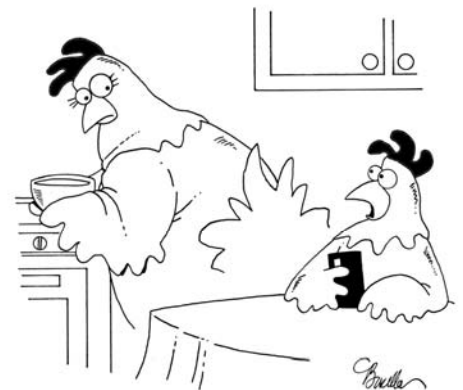
According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, construction employment in October was still 201,000 jobs below its February 2020 level.

Laws can affect supply. Strict zoning laws and construction regulations make it difficult or impossible to build apartments and homes in some states and areas, so housing stock becomes tight.

On the other hand, prices that stay very high for a long time can, in fact, lower demand as buyers become discouraged. Then, more houses go unsold and sellers lower prices to entice buyers.

Meanwhile, rents can go up because it costs more to buy a rental property and there is more demand for rental property, if people can't afford to buy houses.

All that said, here's a good rule of thumb: The best time to buy a house is when you are ready.



"Mom, what kind of soup do we eat when we're sick?"



The evolution of a timeless beauty product

According to New Scientist, our species, Homo sapiens, became distinct about 350,000 years ago. And for about 348,980 of those years, there was no such thing as anti-perspirant.

But we did have perfume, and lots of it. According to Sarah Everts in her article *A Brief History of Perfume: Visiting an Archive of Ancient Scents* (available on Literary Hub), for most of our history, we've used perfumes to change our bodies' fragrances, to cover up funky smells, in religious rituals, and to signify wealth and power. Some cultures even believed that perfumes could protect us from diseases. And far from the golden or colorless alcohol-based liquids we're accustomed to seeing in today's department stores, perfumes in the past were often contained in ointments or dispersed in a fragrant smoke. Perfumed oils were equally common, according to the Getty institute -- in 2003, archaeologists uncovered the 4,000-year-old ruins of a perfume factory in Cyprus, where ancient Cypriots used olive oil to extract fragrant plant oils.

Animal-derived ingredients, such as glandular oils from musk deer and civet cats, were common for centuries. Ambergris, a waxy substance that sperm whales secrete into their intestines, was highly prized as a fixative during the 18th and 19th centuries.

Humans smell a lot better than we used to, thanks to modern plumbing and anti-perspirants, but we still love perfume. According to Business Insider, perfume sales spiked in the first quarter of 2021. Industry watchers aren't surprised -- perfume is easy to use, less expensive than other luxuries and can lift our spirits.

How Chinese food became a Jewish Christmas tradition

According to one New York rabbi, one question has persisted for as long as Jews live alongside Christians: What should we do on Christmas?

The solution that 19th century American Jews landed on is practically a Christmas tradition unto itself: Jews eat Chinese food on Christmas.

According to Rabbi Joshua Eli Plaut, author of the book *A Kosher Christmas*, the first mention of American Jews eating in a Chinese restaurant dates back to 1899 in the American Hebrew Journal. But the tradition has really gained steam in the last 35 years, when Chinese restaurants have become the destination of choice for American Jews on Christmas.



In fact, in many cities, the biggest day of the year for Chinese restaurants is Chinese New Year, followed closely by Christmas, Plaut writes.

It probably happened first for convenience. There wasn't much for Jews to do on Christmas. No one was working. Everything was closed -- except for Chinese restaurants. They were not just open, they were close. In New York city, the Jewish community on the Lower East side was virtually next door to Chinatown. And there was the added benefit that Chinese restaurant owners, who didn't practice Christianity either, didn't discriminate against Jews. In fact, according to Plaut, the Chinese just saw two groups: Chinese and non-Chinese, and both were customers.

By the 1950s, Chinese food was gaining in popularity. People wanted to try new things. Everything exotic was in fashion and Chinese food was considered very cosmopolitan.

Chinese food also had the benefit of being nearly kosher. Since dairy isn't a big part of Chinese food, Jewish diners didn't have to worry about the prohibition of mixing meat and milk. Of course, the egg rolls had pork but, according to Sarah Lohman, author of *Eight Flavors: The Untold Story of American Cuisine*, these were either easily avoided or the ingredients in an egg roll, chopped so finely after all, could be ignored. If nothing else, Jewish diners loved the Chinese egg dishes.

And so it happened that Christmas became the day that Jews eat Chinese. Pass the soy sauce.

How big is the Pacific Ocean? Immense.

The earth seems pretty small these days, with everyone everywhere being able to talk or text with anyone anywhere.

This is an illusion of technology. The ball on which we travel is immense and its component parts are astonishingly large.

How big is the Pacific Ocean? It is so vast that:

(Statista, Skillshare, Wikipedia, Space.com)

- At its widest point from Indonesia to South America, you could put the diameter of five of our moons across it.
- You could put Mars in the middle of it. The Pacific Ocean is

20 million square km larger than the surface area of Mars.

- Every one of the world's continents could fit in the Pacific basin.

How big is the Africa continent? (Scientific American)

- The continental United States almost fills up the round cap at the top of the African continent.

- After you put in the U.S., you still have room for China, Japan, Spain, Portugal, Belgium, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Ireland, the UK, Austria, Part of Eastern Europe, Greece, Italy, Germany, Poland, and France.

December 2021



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Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 Christmas tree lighting NYC	2	3	4
5	6 Hanukkah ends	7 Pearl Harbor Memorial 	8	9	10 Human Rights Week	11
12	13	14 Christmas Bird Count	15	16 Posadas: Mexico	17	18
19	20	21 Winter begins 	22	23	24	25 Christmas
26 Boxing Day	27	28	29	30	31 New Year's Eve	

October 2021 Florida Single Family Homes Market Detail

Click on the Image for the full report

Monthly Market Detail - October 2021
Single-Family Homes
Florida





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Summary Statistics	October 2021	October 2020	Percent Change Year-over-Year
Closed Sales	27,628	29,659	-6.8%
Paid in Cash	8,256	6,584	25.4%
Median Sale Price	\$358,950	\$305,000	17.7%
Average Sale Price	\$483,685	\$428,597	12.9%
Dollar Volume	\$13.4 Billion	\$12.7 Billion	5.1%
Median Percent of Original List Price Received	100.0%	98.3%	1.7%
Median Time to Contract	12 Days	21 Days	-42.9%
Median Time to Sale	53 Days	67 Days	-20.9%
New Pending Sales	30,128	31,248	-3.6%
New Listings	31,170	33,305	-6.4%

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