

# Overrun by artwork? Here's how to keep a tidy house

By VIRGINIA JUSTICE

Let's face reality – in nearly every home, space is limited. Is your fridge door overrun by your children's artwork? Mine often was and though my refrigerator surface space has increased over the years, my kids' artwork has grown in size as well.

What to do ... you just have to keep all of their pictures, macaroni art, etc., right? I mean, someday they may become a world-famous artist and all of their childhood art will be priceless. Not only that, but displaying their artwork is inspiring their creativity and showing them that you value their work. So how do you keep this art from taking over the refrigerator door, the walls, and the house?

My system was to buy both children a plastic bin with a lid. After their art and report cards had overstayed their welcome on the refrigerator, we put the items in the box. Today, my girls get a huge kick out of looking at their childhood artwork, discovering how prophetic our youngest was in drawing her older sister with purple hair when she was about age five. The oldest did have purple hair in high school and beyond. These treasures also provide children a view to their past and a way of seeing their artistic ability grow.

My parents put our art treasures into folders in a file cabinet. They gave each of us our folders when we got our first home. Others frame specific art projects and use a large wall as the family art gallery, complete with lighting. As a fourth grade teacher, I used plastic sheet covers in a three-inch binder to store student gifts of artwork. It was a great way to keep the artwork from taking



over my classroom.

One idea I toy with is using some of my children's artwork as background pages for scrapbooking. Part of me does not want to cut up the art and the other part of me thinks it would be wonderful way to tie their artwork into pictures of them at the age the art was made. I can tell you that after nearly 20 years I will not be using the macaroni or rice artwork for scrapbooking. Old macaroni gets smashed and sometimes falls off the paper when the glue dries out. Rice art does slightly better but I've found a lot of rice kernels at the bottom of storage boxes.

I never figured a way to stabilize rice/macaroni art, but I now think that Mod Podge might have worked. This is a water-based prod-

uct like decoupage in the '70s, but I didn't learn about it until recently. Coating the art when it's new may prevent loose glue, though probably not broken macaroni. The key is a light hand and letting each coat thoroughly dry before applying another.

Three-dimensional artwork can be quite a challenge. Since they are less numerous, I display those on an entertainment center. Public display, however, requires dusting, and a couple of pieces have been broken during moves or children roughhousing. Now that the girls are older, I think I'll bubble wrap their 3D art and put it in their memory boxes. The bronze sculpture my daughter created in high school will stay and I'm planning to hang some of her drawings once they are

professionally framed.

Taking photographs or scans of childhood art may be the best idea, though a part of me is reluctant to part with these precious treasures even though they are falling apart. But quality photos maintain the memories and can be stored either in printed or digital form. Additionally, photos of the 3D artwork preserve the art without taking up precious space. Regardless of how you preserve your child's art, you are also retaining memories of youth and that is the most important thing.

---

*Home economist Virginia Justice holds an education degree. The Pendleton resident and her husband have two college-aged daughters.*