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Integrating Forms of Artwork Into Workplace Can Enhance Overall Environment, Firm Image



The ability to integrate artwork provides endless opportunities to highlight focal spaces and stimulate interest in the overall office space environment. For the Coyle Co., an exclusive estate and generational planning company, Boston-based Margulies & Assoc. created an interior design based on a palette of classic neutrals of varying textures, offset with accent paints and original artwork.



Historically, companies throughout New England have assembled impressive artwork collections ranging from simple prints to original works of fine art. Maric, now based in Needham, Mass., moved from Boston's Back Bay neighborhood and seized upon the opportunity to create a brand new look for its corporate offices.

BY STEPHEN FOX

As companies' office space requirements continue to evolve, often resulting in relocation, expansion or contraction, facilities professionals strive to carefully balance the integration of numerous amenities to satisfy business and cultural trends. These factors include traditional amenities such as food service, conference centers, lounge and break-out space, wellness facilities as well as emerging spiritual space to satisfy varied religious observation. In addition, as these same companies seek to customize their space to reflect corporate culture, the ability to integrate various forms of artwork provides endless opportunities to highlight focal spaces and stimulate interest in the overall office space environment.

Companies throughout New England have historically assembled impressive artwork collections ranging from simple prints to original works of fine art. Regardless of collection size, managing a creative artwork program can be a complex yet fulfilling process. To assist companies, various museums, galleries and art consulting services are available to provide appraisal, restoration, acquisition, framing, installation and overall artwork management programs, allowing area companies to outsource this specialized expertise.

One of the many resources available is the mother/daughter team of Sunne Savage and Christina Neuman of the Sunne Savage Gallery. Based just outside Boston in Winchester, Mass., this unique women-owned business provides services to New England's leading insurance and financial services companies. Their work has recently included large fit-out projects providing careful selection and specific placement of existing and newly acquired artwork to complement a new health insurance company's design and surroundings, including the integration of a concentration of local artists to instill a strong New England environment. These efforts are further complemented by the introduction of gallery space to house revolving displays coordinated by Savage and Neuman.

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When considering engaging these types of services there are numerous factors to consider, including the image and message you wish the artwork to display; the style and content of the artwork; and, the initial investment budget and long-term acquisition strategy.

Neuman cites the more interesting programs as those where the style and content is varied to include traditional and contemporary paintings, prints, and three dimensional works aligned with an acquisition strategy that includes the purchase of a new piece every year.

Since artwork acquisition can be a time consuming and costly endeavor, art consulting services are adapt at organizing various options by emerging and established artists to expand any collection. These options can be initially reviewed in photographic format and later viewed in person to narrow the selection process. Once completed and acquired, framing services may be necessary based on the type and/or style of purchase. Additionally, framing changes may need to be made to match the office space where the artwork will be installed. The advice and coordination provided by art consultants is invaluable at this stage to properly protect and display the piece. Once completed, the piece is ready for installation and should be carefully placed to complement the key wall spaces and furniture arrangements throughout the overall office space. The style, size and investment may dictate placement in key customer and/or client interaction spaces, but equal consideration should be focused on the overall office environment to achieve a balanced distribution of the collection.

Like any valuable collection, an asset inventory should be assembled to track the key information regarding each piece. A complete inventory will include the artist's name, date of creation, medium, size, framing type, acquisition cost, and estimated market value. As the values of these investments vary dramatically, insurance and periodic appraisals should be considered to protect and accurately understand the value of the collection.

Company relocations and renovations pose a significant challenge to facilities and design professionals when it comes to artwork. The services of art consultants should be utilized to provide the timely tactical support necessary to inventory and remove valuable artwork, provide

appropriate storage and transportation, and coordinate placement and reinstallation. These tasks should preferably take place when the project site is complete and the risk of potential damage due to construction or moving is minimized. The preliminary review of focal locations to refine environmental conditions, specialty lighting and unique hanging and display requirements is necessary to ensure that artwork and other decorative accessories are integrated into the interior design to maximize the full impact of the new office concept. Engagement of these services as early in the design process as possible will ensure proper architectural and engineering considerations are analyzed and steps taken to coordinate these integral visual components.

As the capital cost of high-end architectural finishes continues to rise, artwork acquisition and integration presents an alternative approach to minimize construction related expenditures to achieve a desired visual outcome. Given the natural pressure to manage these rising costs, the ability to display various artwork types can alleviate the need for expensive wall surface finishes. A leading Boston accounting practice recently designed their office to highlight an extensive collection of contemporary art by providing simple white wall surfaces and focusing their artwork investment on specialized lighting to display the art.

Considering that a client, prospective employee or business partner's first impression of your company's office space is often initially driven by the artwork displayed in the building lobby or reception space, the thoughtful integration of the art is a front and center reflection of the company's image and style that stimulates interest and discussion. The additional planning and thoughtful consideration to create an atmosphere that stands apart from the competition will often make the difference as your company seeks to expand its opportunities and level of success.

About the Author

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