

# ARTFUL LIVING

By Scott LaFontsee

## Art in Your Business | Reaping the Benefits

### Did you know that art is

one of the most successful tools for projecting your corporate image? Art, like a business card, logo, or advertisement, builds the image your business conveys to your clients, staff, and the community. Great art will enrich almost any type of business and décor if handled properly. The medical, legal, and technical professions provide excellent illustrations of how a business can use art for more than merely decorative purposes.

In hospitals and medical offices the styles of artwork and images have a very specific goal: to calm and comfort the patients, visitors, and staff. These businesses use artwork throughout their entire facility, including their hallways, waiting rooms, and patient rooms. The artwork may even differ from floor to floor and wing to wing to communicate different messages to different people. For example, artwork chosen for the special care units may be quite different from that in the children's hospital. Colors and styles are carefully chosen to create a pleasant environment and a relaxed mood for the viewers. When people are in the hospital as patients or visitors, challenge or confrontation is the last thing needed. Illness itself naturally leads to stress, whereas a soft landscape will offer much more comfort than an abstract with large shapes and loud colors.

Another example comes from a local law firm whose recently redecorated their offices. The



The geometric forms in these contemporary paintings accentuate the décor and the progressive image of the architectural/engineering firm, URS Corporation. Clients and staff alike feel stimulated by this expressive use of artwork.



Located in the new J.W. Marriot hotel, these commissioned paintings from a local Michigan artist add points of interest and complement the style and décor.

firm had already made their decisions about flooring, wall coverings, and furnishings. Then they began to look at options for artwork. One of the partners soon realized that the artwork they were considering only reflected the employees personal tastes and the new office décor, but had little connection to the firm's image. Here is a key lesson: personal taste may not always be in line with the business' image.

We were able to help them develop their art collection to

project the corporate image they wanted: one of experience, trustworthiness and dependability, along with being progressive and current. We updated the framing of some of their existing collection, and displayed their more traditional pieces of art in areas that customarily represented more conservative areas of their business. Adding artwork from respected local and regional artists enhanced their new office space with a progressive style, which also displayed a strong commitment to the community. The regional art was framed to support their more traditional décor. The final result

### The Effective use of art can benefit your business in many ways:

- Art can express who and what your business is.
- Art can create an atmosphere that influences the staff and clients.
- Art can accentuate workspace aesthetics and décor.
- Art can reduce long-term décor expenses.
- Art can create an opportunity for cultural appreciation.
- Art purchased by regional artists displays support of the local arts community.
- Art purchased can be taken as a tax expense.
- Artwork can sing your song and look great in your space as well!

expressed the values of their business and the image they wanted to project. Furthermore, by combining their existing artworks with the work of current artists, their investment will appreciate in value over time and support their corporate image for years to come.

Now consider a business that sells computer software, programming services, or other technology. Would soft landscapes and peaceful scenes in quiet colors create an image a technology company would want to project? Instead, a technology company would most likely want to be perceived as confident, cutting-edge, and challenge-oriented. For such a business contemporary art, art with a large voice, will project a challenging and forward-thinking image. Finding artwork with unusual materials, or works with expected materials in innovative ways, would display this type of image. Addressing the corporate mindset or image is also conducive to the work environment and to the staff working in it. In the case of high-tech companies, using art to create a stimulating environment will benefit not only the designers and programmers, but also the advertising, marketing, and sales departments.

Deciding what art to use and where to display it to most effectively reflect your corporate image can be challenging. To reap the full benefits of your art investment, you may want to take advantage of the skill and advice of a trained art professional. Can a small office or business do this with a conservative budget? Most certainly. There are many ways to accomplish this without spending large sums of money, and individuals and businesses can do this by themselves with a little work and some clear direction. Indeed, when looking at the benefits compared to the costs, artwork is much more economical than it may appear.

Unlike other items, like carpet or furniture, good art will last for many years. Think of your budget for carpet. Is the art budget even close to that? Carpet's life expectancy is about five years. Artwork, if you pick quality work and use your professional image as a guide, has a life expectancy of at least twenty or more years. In fact, quality artwork does not go bad, but actually increases in value. Last summer the Grand Rapids Art Museum had a ten-year retrospective exhibition of artwork by Rick Stevens, a well-known local artist. Many area businesses that have Stevens' work in their collections chose to have their artwork re-framed for display in this exhibition. While taking apart these paintings for re-framing, we noticed the prices written on the back of many of the works. Although the businesses were still using these paintings in their offices, the value of the artwork had sometimes increased by ten times the original price. This demonstrates long-term benefit of choosing artwork that will do more than support your image for years to come. As you can see from the businesses who use Mr. Stevens' work, the expenses amortized over many years, combined with the appreciation of value, create a solid investment.

# CLIENTS

A partial list of clients and projects.



Penninsular Club, Grand Rapids, MI

A.J. Veneklasen Inc.  
 Art Serve MI  
 BBK Studios  
 BDR Executive Homes  
 Belding Museum  
 Bissel Inc.  
 Carol Wixom Design  
 Central Michigan University  
 Concept Design Group  
 Cook Institute  
 CQL  
 Cull Design Group  
 Current Assets, LLC.  
 Design+  
 Frederick Meijer Gardens  
 Frey Foundation  
 Gilda's Club Grand Rapids  
 God's Kitchen  
 Godwin Heights Public School  
 Grand Rapids Art Museum  
 Grand Rapids Ballet Company  
 Grand Rapids Foundation  
 Grand Rapids Opera  
 Grand Rapids Public Museum  
 Grand Rapids Symphony  
 Grand Valley State University  
 Guilford of Maine  
 Herman Miller SQA  
 Izzy Design  
 J. Sherman Associates  
 Jan's Interiors Associates  
 Johnson Controls  
 Kindell Furniture  
 Leap Frog  
 McGlynn Design Group  
 Mika Meyers Beckett & Jones  
 Miller, Johnson, Snell  
 Milliken Fabric  
 MMPC- Holland & Grand Rapids  
 Morrison Industrial Equip.  
 Nucraft  
 Nokomis Foundation  
 Fifth Third Bank  
 Ottawa County Municipal

Progressive AE  
 R.O.I. Design  
 RBC Ministries  
 Reagan Marketing  
 Rick Whallon Design  
 Robert Grooters Development  
 Rock Kauffman Design  
 Schemata Inc.  
 Scott Group  
 Siemens Dematic  
 Spectrum Health  
 Square One Design  
 Steelcase - National Showrooms  
 The B.O.B.  
 The Pinnacle Center  
 Travel Consultants Trendway  
 UICA  
 URS Corporation  
 Van Daff Interiors  
 VanDyke Studios  
 Varnum, Riddering, Schmidt & Howlett  
 Very Special Arts  
 Via Design  
 Visbeen Associates  
 Warner, Norcross & Judd  
 Windquest  
 YWCA-Run Jane Run



Steelcase

LAFONTSEE GALLERIES  
 UNDERGROUND STUDIO