

Gallery's art adds flare to corporate culture

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Are you a corporate executive whose taste in fine art runs to reproductions of "Dogs Playing Pool?" Do you have trouble distinguishing between a Monet and a Mondrian, much less between a Kryvolap and a Sharashidze? Are the sterile, white walls of your newly Euro-remoted branch office getting you down?

Fear not, boardroom warriors. Help is on the way in the form of the emergent arts consulting industry.

Leading the charge is Kyiv's oldest professional gallery, ARTEast. In 1999 ARTEast initiated its A.R.T.S. (Art Rental to Own Scheme) program to encourage multinational companies, banks and embassies to decorate their offices with original pieces of contemporary Ukrainian art.

"This is a new service and ours is the first gallery which offers such services as well as the layaway and art rental program," said Marketing Director Iryna Tryhub.

The program is an extension of ARTEast's interior-decorating service. Tryhub and staff designer Lena Dobrovol'ska recognized a need to address not only the lack of familiarity with contemporary art, but also to convince business owners that original artwork adds to the comfort of employees and clients alike.

Tryhub and Dobrovol'ska meet with interested clients to discuss their preferences, as well as to evaluate the needs of the particular space to be decorated. Using this general outline, they then turn to their nationwide database of Ukrainian artists, often visiting studios and perusing new works to come up with a range of suitable options. They then give an on-site presentation of suggested works for client approval. The goal is to provide not simply wall hangings, but to create a total environment that is, according to Tryhub, "unique and special."

The A.R.T.S. program features a



Helen Kryshtalowych, managing Partner of Squire, Sanders and Dempsey, stands in the company conference room surrounded by the works of Tiberiy Silvasny. The firm buys and rents its office art through ARTEast's A.R.T.S. program. (Post photo by Viktor Suvorov)

range of payment options geared to address what Tryhub sees as trepidation about the high cost of owning original art. Clients may rent pieces for a monthly fee, purchase pieces on a rent-to-own basis, or purchase them outright. The minimum rental term is three months and rates are negotiated individually with the client.

The rental arrangement also allows clients to exchange their chosen works, creating a perpetually rotating exhibition.

Tryhub was hesitant to name dollar figures for ARTEast's consulting services, as the cost of a project is dependent on the cost of the artwork. The works themselves may run from \$100 to thousands of dollars per piece. However, the fee for consulting services is computed into the cost of the artwork, as are transportation services, documentation, framing and hanging.

While Tryhub concedes that even on a layaway basis, the cost of displaying original artwork is still high, ARTEast offers additional incentives such as discounts for regular clients and a selection of lower-cost graphics and drawings.

ARTEast services multinational corporations such as Proctor and Gamble, international firms such as Squire, Sanders and Dempsey, and local leaders such as Ukrainian International Airlines. They are currently at work on a project with the American Chamber of Commerce.

The bulk of ARTEast clients are foreign firms with branch offices. Tryhub confesses that most Ukrainian business are unwilling to make this sort of investment in the workplace. They are much more willing to settle for reproductions or the drab aesthetic legacy of the Soviet era. According to Tryhub, multinationals seem to have a better understanding

of the atmospheric and investment benefits of original artwork.

As is the case in the United States, where a well-developed art consulting industry exists, the willingness of companies to invest in original artwork depends largely on the state of the economy. In times of prosperity, companies have more expendable income to invest in decor.

Despite the general economic chaos in Ukraine, the steady presence of foreign firms with branch offices in Kyiv should provide continued business for the likes of ARTEast.

ARTEAST GALLERY

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For more information on the A.R.T.S. program, contact Iryna Tryhub at art@arteast.kiev.ua or check out www.arteast.org.