

Practice & Law

ART APPRECIATION

Corporate social responsibility Rachel Wevill and Beth Ambrose look through the prism of a pioneering partnership with the University of Westminster and the Royal College of Art at the benefits of fine art investment in offices

“One ought, every day at least, to hear a little song, read a good poem, see a fine picture, and, if it were possible, to speak a few reasonable words,” wrote Johann Wolfgang von Goethe in *Wilhelm Meister’s Apprenticeship*.

Music and poetry have yet to form part of the daily mandate for staff at Travers Smith (although there is now a piano in the auditorium). The reasonable words get spoken, though, and now, thanks to the CSR Art Programme – a partnership between the law firm, the University of Westminster and the Royal College of Art – staff and visitors

are assured of seeing fine pictures.

In their 2014 *Art & Finance* report, Deloitte and ArtTactic reported that some 88% of the family offices and 64% of the private banks surveyed predicted that estate planning around art and collectables would be a strategic focus in the coming 12 months. The main objective for this appeared to be asset diversification strategy.

Fast-forward to the start of 2016. Art market growth has been showing signs of slowing and this, combined with slower economic growth, increasing volatility

in the financial markets and, no doubt, Brexit has meant that the picture (excuse the pun) for practising artists is becoming increasingly uncertain. Providing support for these graduates is more pertinent than ever.

But why do offices display art? Investment isn’t the driver, here. In addition to the evident benefits for the participating artists in the Travers Smith programme, the benefits for staff and visitors are manifold.

JLL has been working on property industry megatrends in the area

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ONLINE THIS WEEK

LAW REPORT The Estates Gazette Law Reports are now available exclusively on EGI each week. This week we report *Sinclair Gardens Investments (Kensington) Ltd v Wisbey*.

of sustainability. In its publication *The big eight for UK real estate* the authors recognise the “health and wellness imperative”, and “transparency and social value” as two of eight critical factors for the real estate sector.

Health and wellness

The social value of the Travers Smith programme is clear, but a particularly interesting rationale for introducing artwork into office space can also be drawn from the health and wellness imperative.

In 2013, the World Green Building

Council (WorldGBC), along with industry experts from across the globe, embarked on a fascinating project to collate robust evidence on the contribution office buildings make to people's health, wellbeing and productivity.

The human imperatives for improvements to employee health and wellbeing are obvious, but the financial drivers are also clear, if we recognise that staff costs typically account for about 90% of the operating costs of a business. Even a modest improvement in employee wellbeing and productivity can have a significant

Previous pages:

Nostalgia 1 by Luanna
Flammia

This page:

Dim by Sunyoung
Hwang

Opposite page:

The Silence of the City,
asleep at night –
Untitled by Nico Virides
(top) and Cuboid by
Hatice Atas



financial implication for employers.

The WorldGBC report was published in 2014, concluding that there are nine key features of a healthy building that make all the difference to its occupants, with interior aesthetics and access to views being two of those features.

Various studies have connected the hard numbers – such as revenue and absence statistics – to the physical elements of a workplace, demonstrating that well-designed space can generate health and productivity gains for its occupants.

The case for displaying artwork in offices certainly goes beyond impressing visitors and affecting the atmosphere of a room. It enhances psychological wellbeing and aspects of physical health, as well as productivity. If we consider that a full-time employee spends an average 30% of his or her life at work, this is not surprising, but let's look at the evidence.

A US survey (carried out by the Business Committee for the Arts in collaboration with the International Association for Professional Art Advisors) of 800 employees, working for 32 companies that display art within the workplace, reported reduced stress, increased creativity and productivity, enhanced morale and employee appreciation.

Displaying art that is personalised to different areas of the workplace is also a way of highlighting that the company

ART IN OFFICES – PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS TO BEAR IN MIND

While the social benefits of art are plentiful, there are a number of practical implications to be borne in mind by occupiers when displaying artwork.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

- A risk assessment and method statement will be required from the installer
- Occupier will have to issue a permit to work

TRANSPORTATION

- Art is usually wrapped by the artist
- Occupier will have to procure specialist art transportation
- Logistical assessment of access will be required for larger pieces

LOADING

- Liaise with architects to ensure supporting structure is sufficient for heavy pieces
- Check prohibition on loading in lease, if relevant

INSURANCE

- Transporters will have specialised insurance
- Insurance risk passed to occupier as soon as art is at the premises

DECORATION AND MAINTENANCE

- Some occupiers mitigate annual decoration costs by installing hanging systems and replaceable signage
- Bespoke lighting may be required

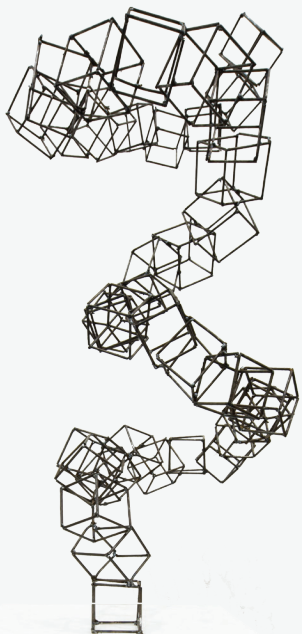
treats each of its members of staff as individuals, another example of the positive psychological impact that art can have.

The Travers Smith programme has a dedicated space showcasing artwork that reflects significant elements of the firm's broader corporate social responsibility work: supporting refugees and asylum seekers and promoting greater LGBT inclusion. In addition, a group of photos showcasing female sportswomen reflects another Travers Smith initiative focused on the topic of sport and inclusion.

Artwork can also provide a much-needed and interesting new focus for the eyes to prevent excessive concentration on a computer monitor (in line with standard health and safety advice).

Perhaps most interestingly for employers concerned about their bottom lines, research by psychology professors Craig Knight and S Alexander Haslam of the University of Exeter has also demonstrated a direct link between the working environment and levels of professional satisfaction and productivity – showing that employees worked 15% more efficiently in an “enriched” office, one decorated with art and plants, particularly when they have decision-making power over the choice and location of the art.

One final area in which art in the workplace can make a real difference is



THE TRAVERS SMITH CSR ART PROGRAMME

A committee, comprised of lawyers and support staff, was invited to view the end-of-year degree shows for the University of Westminster and the Royal College of Art and to choose pieces that Travers Smith might borrow for a year to put in its newly refurbished meeting rooms and public spaces.

Each artist receives a fee for participating in the programme, with a poll at the end of the year in which Travers Smith staff vote for their favourite piece, with a cash prize to be awarded to the most popular artist.

In addition to the "people's" vote, an expert panel of independent judges awards a further cash prize to one of the artists.

The pieces, including sculpture, digital photography on aluminium, and oil on canvas, are now in place among redeveloped meeting areas, integrated kitchens, café and auditorium. The works are listed in a catalogue and available for sale.

The programme serves a number of valuable purposes. "It is at the heart of our corporate responsibility work and underlines our CSR commitment from the moment someone steps into our offices," says CSR partner Daniel Gerring.

In addition to showcasing the artists' pieces, Travers Smith is enhancing the support the programme offers to nurture the emerging talent of those involved. This will include training with intellectual property and commercial contract lawyers, workshops on business skills and pro-bono legal advice relevant to being a professional artist.

getting the conversation started. Nothing excites interest and debate like art and the built environment and nothing promotes collegiality and effective team working like co-workers actually talking to each other. At Travers Smith, with its ergonomic refurbishment and innovative art project, there is daily evidence of the positive effect of a better building for a working community.

View the catalogue at: www.traverssmith.com/csr-and-diversity/corporate-social-responsibility/art-programme

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