

Borrowed beauty

The growing numbers of businesses interested in surrounding their employees with original works of art don't have to invest stupendous amounts of money anymore.

Since last year, companies have been able to rent sculptures, photography, graphics and paintings from **Art Office**, a Polish-Dutch company that specializes in lending contemporary art to corporate clients.

Krysztyna Starczyk, the director of Art Office, said companies have specific requirements regarding the kind of art they will hang on their walls. "We have to avoid nudity and portraiture," Starczyk said. "People have to work looking at that."

Since its inception, Art Office has signed more than 40 contracts with artists, five of them Dutch, and taken their works on deposit. "The largest number of works (on deposit) are paintings and graphics," Starczyk said.

Artists who enter into an agreement with Art Office are both unknowns having just finished their studies and well-known figures such as Jerzy Stokowski, who specializes in jazz photography, Elzbieta Oliszewska-Banecka, who does experimental graphics, and Barbara Nowiadowska-Dyga, a painter and graphic artist.

Nowiadowska-Dyga is the favorite painter of **Andersen Consulting's** office manager, Aleksandra Leszczyńska, who keeps an eye on the decoration of her company's offices. Andersen's move from the Atrium Tower to the Warsaw Tower created a good excuse to give its employees something new to look at. "We signed a year-long contract with Art Office two months ago," Leszczyńska said. "And now we have about 30 paintings."

Renting the 30 paintings for a monthly fee of z. 40-z. 60 each is not negligible, but it is far less than the cost of buying them. "If you buy only two paintings, it costs a lot," Leszczyńska said. "If you want to buy, your choice is limited."

Leszczyńska tried to choose works that go well with the architectural style of the office. The paintings are located on spaces accessible to all employees. "They are abstracts," Leszczyńska said. "Abstracts are ideal for an office." Showy or overly conventional paintings are not appropriate for Andersen Consulting. "It cannot present mating deer or flowers in a vase," Leszczyńska said.

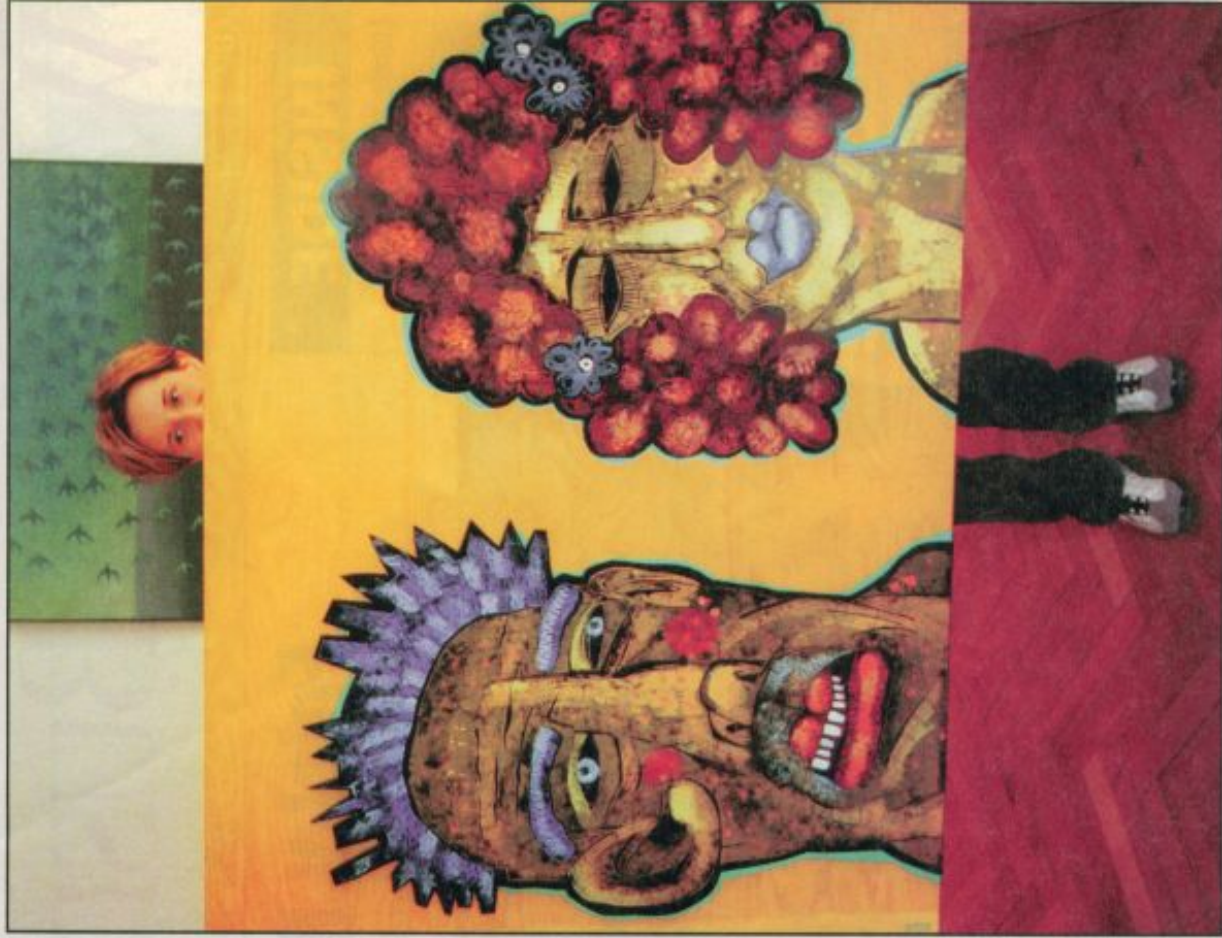
Regus' Atrium Tower office rented more than 10 paintings last year. The company was Art Office's first contract. The works of art on Regus' walls are Dutch water paintings in pastel colors. "We are going to replace them in a year," said Ewelina Witkowska, the manager at Regus. "Our clients notice them (paintings)," she said. "And other Atrium residents are following our example by also taking paintings from Art Office."

Art Office has so far rented about 150 works to 20 companies. When asked to describe what firms are interested in its services, Starczyk didn't stop to think. "Companies with foreign capital," she said. "They have greater budgets, especially for self-marketing purposes."

Art Office currently has about 500 paintings on offer. The number will increase to around 600 paintings from well-known Polish artists when the company finalizes its deal with the art gallery Galeria Sztuki Współczesnej Zachęta this month. Among the paintings Art Office will be able to supply are those by famous national figures such as Zbigniew Beksiński and Jerzy Duda-Grac. The agreement with Zachęta is timely, as corporate interest in art seems to be increasing. "It is developing gradually," Starczyk said. "Each month we acquire one or two new clients."

For those new clients, Art Office has prepared new prices effective this month, which include insurance. Less expensive works rent for z. 45 monthly, but the average price is z. 110. Starczyk said works from Zachęta will be the most expensive. "They will vary between z. 120-z. 400," she said. "And the z. 400 will be for a Beksiński."

— Justyna Wróbel



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