



## Interior Design & Maintenance

# Enhancing Your Building's Image and Value with Art

by Diana Lomont

**W**hen was the last time you walked into a lobby and a colorful painting or interesting sculpture caught your eye?

Hopefully, it wasn't too long ago. Whatever it was that stopped you, the impression went beyond the object of

admiration – it automatically raised the esteem of the building management in your eyes for valuing and sharing quality art.

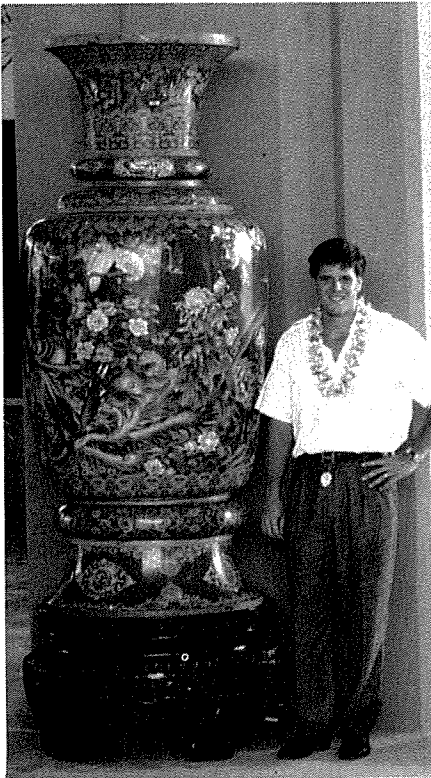
More building owners are realizing the value of art and decorative finishes. A stimulating collection of artful objects can turn any public space into a public attraction.

Of course the type and amount of artwork displayed depends on the audience. Awesome sculptures, 12-ft-tall oriental vases, eclectic collections

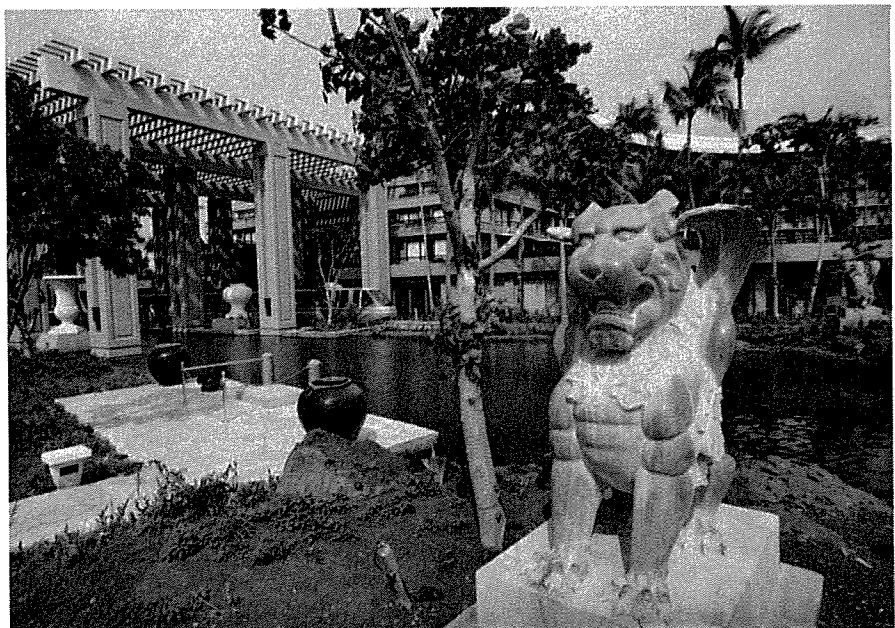
of art from around the world may be fun for a resort like the Hyatt Waikoloa. But Hemmeter Corp.'s art director Chris Hemmeter Jr. admits he has scaled down the density and flamboyance of artwork for office buildings.

"The art we select depends on the type of project we're developing," he said.

For example, Hemmeter Corp. is developing a hotel in southern California that will have a turn-of-the-century architectural style with Mexican influ-



**Chris Hemmeter Jr., next to a giant Oriental vase in the Hyatt Waikoloa: Choose large pieces that will make a visual impact.**



**Sculpture adds interest to landscapes, as shown here at the Hyatt Waikoloa.**

ences. "We sure aren't going to Asia to select art for that project," he quipped.

### More Art Than Ever

Interior designers agree that today it's impossible to get stuck when looking for art. There is more art, and more variety of art, available than ever before. Modern art, commercial art, cultural art, classical art, you name it – whatever sort of "look" you want, it can be found somewhere.

The major problem interior designers cite is developers or building owners who fail to set aside a budget for art. Even 1 percent of a development budget can be enough to add dazzle to a space, according to several local designers.

There are several reasons to invest in art. The most obvious is for a decorative purpose. But art also can help create an image for a building or a company.

"Art is a statement of the image of a company," said Alice Leitner, president of Design Land Concepts. "It shows that they have culture, that a

person's educated even, that they're aware of what is good art, and aware of art's importance in our community."

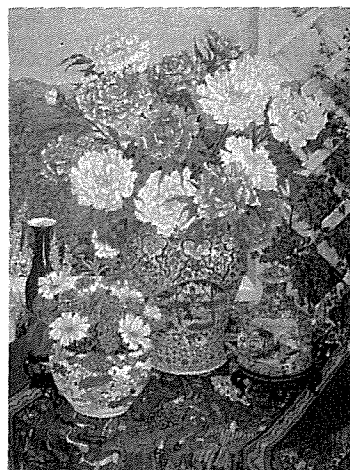
Art can also be an investment. But that depends on the type of art selected. Sheryl Seaman, interior designer with architectural firm Group 70, has seen a lot of original local art from young but developing artists appreciate over the years. Work by Yvonne Chang and Pegge Hopper are good examples of that, she said.

### Selecting Art

Because there are a number of factors that go into choosing the right art – budget, style, color, size – it can be a good idea to get some professional help. An interior designer can help translate a company's or building's desired image into an appropriate selection of artwork. Choosing art that will fit into an interior design is also important, and something a professional designer should have a feel for.

"Art is a language," explained Leit-

ner, who once owned an art gallery in Honolulu. "So you have to be versed in that language and understand it. A good designer knows what your tastes are. They know what you're trying to create, the image you want to project."



Artist: John Powell

Art can either be selected from an existing collection or commissioned. Each has its advantages and preferred place, according to Seaman, depending on the client.

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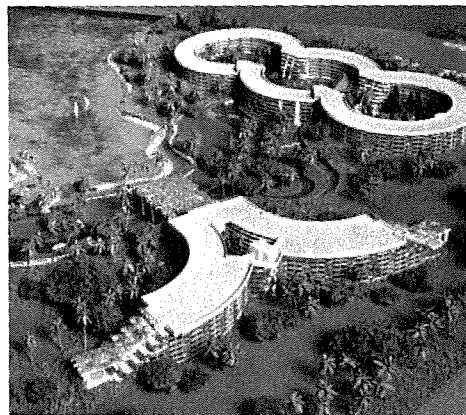
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"If you have a sophisticated client, it's easy to commission works and often works out very well," explained Seaman. "But sometimes if you're working on a limited budget, or you have a client who can't quite visualize what this finished work of art is going to look like, it's better to visit the gallery that represents the artist, or artist's studio, and have them select

from what's already done, because you don't want them to get disappointed."

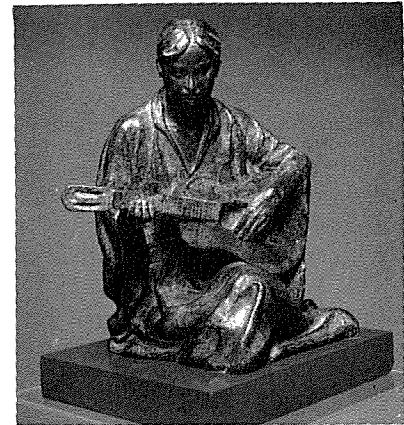
Hemmeter sees many advantages in commissioning local artists. Some 40 local artists were commissioned to decorate the Hyatt Waikoloa. First, commissioning local artists is good public relations.

"I think it's important, when you're doing business in a town, to use the resources of the community. That's the first place you should look," stressed Hemmeter.

Using local artists creates pride and involvement in the community, he explained, "and all that energy is positive and somehow makes things work better."

Hemmeter said he would also rather work with local artists when possible for convenience's sake. He doesn't have to worry about the logistics and risks of shipping in art.

Karren Barozzi, owner of Barozzi Design Inc., uses art from both local galleries and art catalogs from the Mainland. Screened art from the catalogs can be bought for less than \$100



Artist: Felipe Castaneda



Artist: John Buck

per piece, while acrylic paintings are available for less than \$300, she said. For convenience, she prefers to use catalog art and local artists with portfolios.

"The key to me is to have it available so I can show a client right now, give him a price and we're done," she explained. "I think the biggest deterrent has been that if I go all around town and hunt it down, and then the client has to go see it too, it can take many, many hours. And so it can get costly just in the design process, as

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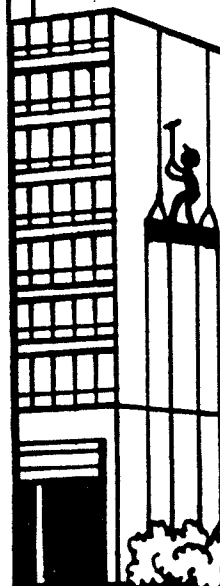
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well as in the cost of the item."

### Getting to the Source

It may take time to hunt down the right piece of art, but Hemmeter sees the effort pay off by getting to the source of the art.

"There are so many layers between the source and the typical buyer," he explained. "A typical buyer will go through his interior designer who goes through an art consultant who goes through a gallery who might go to an agent who gets to the source. For the same premium you pay to do that, you could fly yourself to Hong Kong and dig into the streets and find a nice collection of interesting things."

What criteria does Hemmeter follow when buying art? First, it must be appealing.

"We don't like to buy things that are real aggressive, that have negative connotations, because we're not trying to create a museum where we're showing people the works of the Dark Ages," he said. "We're trying to create imagery that can sort of be exciting and key off their minds and their own

### *Proper placement is the last and most critical step of presenting art.*

imaginations, and let them see different things from different cultures."

Hemmeter's second requirement is for large-scale artwork. He advises building owners to choose pieces that will make a visual impact.

"I think that's a disaster when you have a big wall and a little painting, even if someone has convinced you that it's an investment piece," he said. "That shouldn't be in a public area because one out of 50 people really get something out of it, and say, 'Ah, that's a Jasper Johns, isn't that great,' when the guy could take the same budget and buy a Burmese tapestry ten feet high by eight feet wide for a couple thousand bucks and hang it on the wall. And it's got texture, scale."

### Creating the Most Impact

Hemmeter has other suggestions. Don't be afraid to use large sculpture, he urged prospective art buyers, and

don't be afraid to do the unexpected.

A stroll through the Hyatt Waikoloa will convince you of his commitment to the latter rule. One example is his treatment of the ash urns. Instead of the conventional concrete or stainless steel ash urn, smokers have the privilege of tipping their ashes in the sand-filled mouths of porcelain fishes standing on their tails.

Creating a stimulating variety of pieces is another recommendation of Hemmeter. Use vases, porcelain, quilts, collages, planters to create an interesting palette of texture, shape and color, he suggested.

Placement is the last but most critical step of presenting art. With placement comes appropriate lighting. Hemmeter uses plenty of track lighting, which can be redirected and changed with different kinds of bulbs to achieve the desired effect.

"You can select the right collection of art, but if you don't place it correctly, and you don't light it correctly, and your pedestal program isn't appropriate, it just doesn't look good at all," he said. □

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