

# NEWS FROM *The New York Times*

## Using Local Artists To Add Color To Office Buildings

By CAROLE PAQUETTE  
Published: December 16, 2001

LUMINESCENT orange day lilies rising from deep green grass pierce a vast pale blue sky in an oil painting by the East End artist Bruce Lieberman of Water Mill. The approximately 6-by-4-foot work is just one of many by Long Island artists that line the beige lobby and central corridor walls of the sprawling 70,000-square-foot Renaissance Technologies Corporation office building in Setauket.

The collection of paintings is part of an increasing trend by owners of Long Island corporate office buildings to exhibit and often invest in the works of local artists to decorate their public areas. These works, they say, best express the region and help them attract high-quality clients and provide a comfortable atmosphere for their employees.

"I specifically wanted Long Island artists," said James Simons, a principal in Renaissance, a 19-year-old money management corporation that also has offices in Manhattan. Since the Setauket building was constructed four years ago, Mr. Simons has bought 25 works by Long Island artists to line its walls.

"There are a number of good artists here, and we're on Long Island," he said. "It creates an ambience that is not only beautiful but includes one of the island's best assets, its artists."

The trend by corporations on Long Island to exhibit original artwork in their public areas began nearly 20 years ago, said Theodore P. Sasso Jr., senior managing director at Insignia/ESG, the real estate services company.

"It started with EAB Plaza, a major flagship building in Uniondale," he said. "They started the movement to improve the people space in buildings. Prior to that there was just a functional lobby, not a meeting space. Now there is a strong trend to make the buildings of higher quality to attract a higher quality tenant."

The Reckson Associates Realty Corporation, a publicly traded real estate investment trust, is "at the forefront of utilizing art as an invitation to draw people into its buildings," Mr. Sasso said.

"In upgrading and developing many of its buildings, Reckson became more sensitive to the trend and they have some fine works in their buildings," he said.

For years, a monthlong annual exhibit featuring many Long Island artists has been held at the 575,000-square-foot, 10-story Omni, an 11-year-old Reckson office building at Mitchell Field in Uniondale, said Kathleen Giamo, senior vice president and director of corporate development for Reckson, which owns approximately 4 million square feet of office space in Nassau and Suffolk.

Dawn Lee, curator of the Omni exhibit, said: "I try to include Long Island artists in each show. It is important to recognize and support the pool of talent that has chosen to reside on Long Island. Many are nationally and internationally acclaimed."

The Omni Gallery's current exhibit, "Illusive Dimensions," which runs through Jan. 25, includes four Long Island artists: Ray LaMantia of Bay Shore, Margaret Minardi of Fort Salonga, Robert Mielenhausen of Oakdale and Hajime Okubo of Sound Beach.

In addition to the art at the Omni, Reckson owns works by Long Island artists that are displayed permanently in many of its corporate centers, according to Mitchell Rechler, a co-president.

These include paintings by Howard Goldberg of Syosset and woodcarvings by Thomas Fenney and sculptures by Steve Solomon, both of Huntington.

In choosing the art for the Renaissance building, Mr. Simons turned to Elizabeth Goldberg, former director of the nonprofit 36-year-old Gallery North in Setauket, which exhibits works of Long Island artists and craftsmen.

Mrs. Goldberg became curator of the Renaissance collection, ranging in size from an 8-1/2-by-11-inch pastel to two 6-by-4-foot oils and in cost from \$2,000 to \$12,000. The original works average about 3 feet square and are representative of Long Island's landscape. Dynamic big-sky watercolors by Larry Horowitz of Westchester and Setauket and brilliantly colored impressionistic scenes in various seasons by Christian White of St. James dominate the 300-foot-long corridor.

The collection also includes abstracts by Stan Brodsky of Huntington and Anne Raymond of East Hampton; oils by Joseph Reboli of Stony Brook, Ty Stroudsburg of Southold and Anita Lamb of Cold Spring Harbor; and a pastel by Myrna Turteltaub of Port Washington. All the

artists have had extensive gallery exhibitions and reviews, and many are teachers, Mrs. Goldberg said.

ONE corporate collector of a single Long Island artist is Ted Weiss, owner of T. Weiss Realty Corporation in Melville, who has bought more than 30 works by Richard Vaux, an internationally known Lloyd Harbor artist. Mr. Vaux's large nature-oriented compositions have been placed in most of the T. Weiss buildings, including a three-story rotunda in a 48,000-square-foot office building in Hauppauge, and in the core atrium of a 90,000-square-foot building on Broadhollow Road in Melville.

Mr. Vaux continues to create commissioned paintings for new buildings being constructed by the company, including the 80,000-square-foot Melville Corporate Center Two.

"I have purchased his paintings for my buildings particularly because he is a Long Island artist," Mr. Weiss said. "A lot of his work has its origins in Lloyd Harbor. His work is warm and makes you happy, it brings the outdoors in, and it helps create a friendly atmosphere in our buildings."

The warmth in his paintings is attributed to the luminosity resulting from the application of transparent layers of colored oil glazes to the basic painting, Mr. Vaux said. Geometric shapes and lines, often reflective of the architecture of the building it decorates, appear throughout the glowing subtle landscapes.

Mr. Vaux describes his work as "a play of the precision and rigidity of architecture, with the natural asymmetric flowing of nature."

Prices for Mr. Vaux's works range from \$2,200 for a 16-inch-square painting to \$14,000 for a 140-by-48-inch painting. His works are in galleries and public collections around the world, including the EAB Plaza in Uniondale and Kitamura Architects in Tokyo.

"I gravitated toward corporate sales since I do a lot of mid- to large-scale paintings and became known for that," he said. A professor of painting and drawing at Adelphi University in Garden City for the last 32 years, Mr. Vaux said that he does not teach his students to paint especially for corporations, but that in advising them about selling he tells them, "Corporations are a good place because they are looking for an investment, and it's where larger paintings can be placed."

Robert W. Chasnoff, a partner at One and Two Jericho Plaza -- two three-story, 300,000-square-foot office buildings in Jericho -- said that art had been a significant feature in the

buildings since they were constructed in the 1970's by his father and uncle, Michael J. Chasnoff and Allan Chasnoff.

For years, the four free-standing glass showcases in the two 8,000-square-foot lobbies have held art collections owned by Allan Chasnoff, who is now retired. Mr. Chasnoff recently donated his photography collection of more than 1,200 prints to the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston and his 450-piece ceramics collection to the Mint Museum of Craft and Design in Charlotte, N.C. In January, his current book-art collection will be removed from the mahogany 4-foot-long, 3-foot-wide, 3-foot-high glass cases, and the displays will feature Long Island artists.

"Since we are on Long Island as buildings and Mr. Chasnoff is no longer collecting, we will be looking to display the works of local artists in the cases," said Raymon Elozua, a Manhattan artist who has been curating the Chasnoff exhibits for 15 years.

"We found that art is really a great resource for workers," Mr. Elozua said. "It is a wonderful amenity to provide."

Mr. Elozua said he hoped to have the Long Island exhibit in place by June. He has approached several Long Island museums and arts organizations looking to lease artists' works for display, primarily table-top sculpture and small paintings.

"We are interested in quality art," he said, "that maintains the tradition and craft of fine art."