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Art in Offices

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The spaces where we live and work can define who we are and impact our behaviour. This is especially true in the office, where employees spend a big portion of their waking hours, sometimes working in the same room for years. However, it is the owners and directors who set the design tone for an office. While optimising the work space is reasonable, it should also be inspiring to offer a healthy and pleasant work environment. People often ask me if artworks can directly affect employee productivity or well-being? I think a resounding yes!

Frustratingly, adding art to workspaces is still considered an unnecessary expense by many business leaders. This is a misconception that we are seeking to change at ISA Art Advisory. Although many underestimate the positive impact of art, according to Dr Craig Knight from the School of Psychology at Exeter University, it can not only make employees happier and healthier, but also increase their productivity by 32 per cent.

Ultimately, art is the string that can tie a room together with the design, while reflecting the owner's personal taste. Art doesn't have to be the last piece of the puzzle when you're decorating your workspace. In fact, it should be the first. How to pick the right type of art? What kind of art works best? Those are the million-dollar questions, as everyone's taste is different. Following popular taste and my own wisdom, I would say splashes and combinations of colours are a must, as such paintings can alter the mood of a bland meeting room and provide a talking point for participants.

At ISA Art Advisory, art has been the cornerstone of our practice since ISA was established in 2013. Our ever-growing collection of art is regularly rotating in different parts in the office, giving the work environment different moods; a new look can

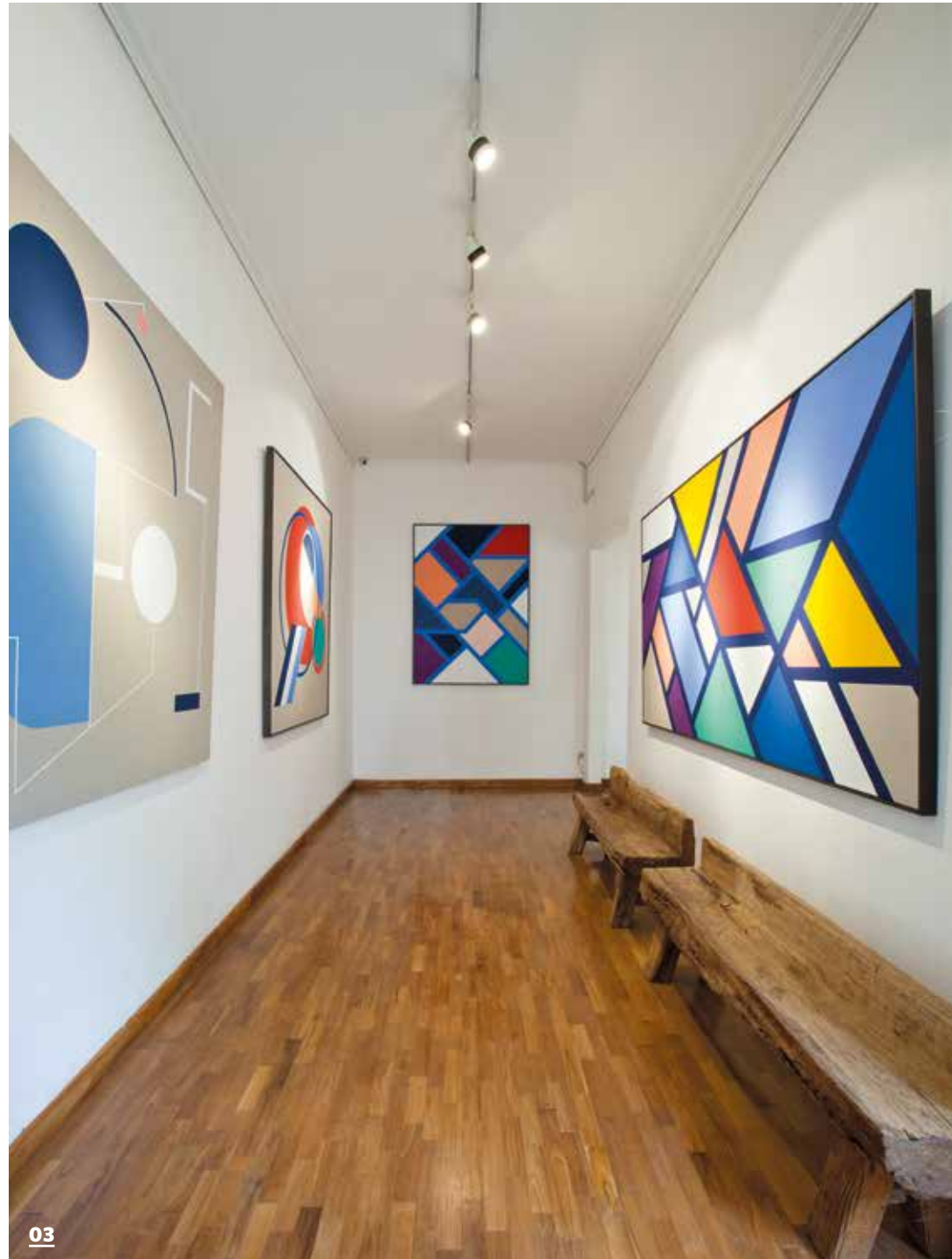


create a bright and cheerful atmosphere or in contrast a more minimalistic and subtle feeling. Therefore, when an employee needs to be refreshed during the workday, they can easily continue their tasks in another room with a different setup.

Our office has a two-fold approach. Located downstairs, the gallery space is devoted to works for sale. The traditional gallery setting with white walls and high ceilings makes the beauty of the artworks stand out. On the other hand, art and design are paired together in the private rooms, giving the opportunity to envision how a painting would look in your home or office. ISA's front gallery usually displays Sinta Tantra, one of the artists represented by our gallery. Distinguished for their colours and symmetry, her works show a dichotomy of masculinity and femininity. Tantra's works greet every person entering through the front door, exuding nostalgic memories of Bali and its traditional music through abstract shapes. The musical theme continues in Aaron Taylor Kuffner's Gamelatron, whose meditative sounds resonate throughout the space, filling it with deep but light-hearted tones.

The lounge room, which is one of the favourite spots for employees to take a break, contains younger emerging artists with nature-inspired paintings evoking the outdoors and bringing nature into the interior. Currently, paintings by three emerging Indonesian artists, Ines Katamso, Ella Wijt and Rega Ayundya are displayed on the walls, paired with an early landscape painting by Yunizar, one of the most established Indonesian artists from the Jendela collective. The lounge room is connected to the main gallery, which displays the full set of Bunganya Dewa Gamelatron by Kuffner. This sonic kinetic sculpture alongside the paintings create a calming and well-balanced space.

ISA's upstairs office consists of the director's room and an open plan workspace for all employees. All rooms are decorated with paintings by local and international artists from my personal collection. In addition to paintings and drawings, we chose to



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add sculptures to create depth and help bring a varying sense of texture into the space.

In my personal room, I am surrounded by all my "old friends", which I have collected over the years. Across my work desk hangs a pair of small floral paintings by Arie Smit. One dates from the 1960s and was acquired at an auction in the US. I also have the privilege to enjoy an early abstract painting by Popo Iskandar from the Jose Leo collection, which is truly special since it was

exhibited at the Sao Paolo Biennale in 1959. The centrepiece is a large whimsical painting by Yung Ty Kim, a Korean artist. With mainly blue-coloured backgrounds, these paintings give the room an accent resonating with the general setting. To have these artworks displayed in an office can surely be a welcome distraction when you feel weary.

Working in a creative field, being inspired and stimulated is crucial for our employees, who need to source the perfect artwork for a client or organise a successful exhibition. Sources of inspiration can of course be found through visiting museums and exhibitions, browsing the internet or doing literary research, and most importantly, liaising with designers who have the talent to merge art and design.

Since we work extensively with interiors at ISA Art Advisory, arranging installations of art and design also helps us visualise how an artwork would fit in a client's home. For instance, in a regular living room, how can one lift up the room's overall look without hindering its flow and function, and making the art stand out too much? It does not mean that in that specific room, the artwork should be camouflaged, because it still has to have an appeal that makes it recognisable. What

is important is the connection with the room the artwork is occupying and naturally the owner; that special meaning or link which is specific to that one person and their story, relating to their past, present or future.

Incorporating art into your workspace is beneficial for elevating the spirit of your employees while working. It is that little extra touch, which can take a space from simply looking functional to actually being able to boost your employees' positive energy and get them inspired. As long as you choose the right pieces and sizes, having art in your workspace can be a perfect addition to the interior, with beneficial results on both private and professional levels. 10

- 01 The lounge room, which is always used by the employees to take a break, is adorned with nature-inspired paintings to evoke the great outdoors into the interior.
- 02 Works by Sinta Tantra, Sally Smart, and Aaron Taylor Kuffner grace the walls of ISA's reception room.
- 03 Sinta Tantra's works in ISA's front gallery, showing a dichotomy of masculinity and femininity through colored and symmetrical shapes.
- 04 A pair of small flower paintings by Arie Smit and a big painting by Yung Ty Kim can surely "distract" you when you feel weary because of work.



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Deborah Iskandar is Principal of ISA Advisory, which advises clients on buying and selling art, and building collections. An expert on Indonesian and international art, she has more than 20 years of experience in Southeast Asia, heading both Sotheby's and Christie's Indonesia during her career before establishing ISA Art Advisory in 2013. She is also the Founder of Indonesian Luxury, the definitive online resource for Indonesian's looking to acquire, build and style their luxury homes.

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