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Who needs a museum when you can visit the local real estate office?

New York real estate industry offices serve as places to display original artworks

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Artist Christian Eckart's "3 Unit Superimposed Circuit Painting" is one of a pair at Cohen Brothers' headquarters.

It's not hard to find impressive artwork in New York City.

There's the Met, and MoMA. And all those Chelsea galleries. Or the nearby real estate office.

Many in the New York real estate industry collect significant artwork, and display it in their company's public spaces and private offices.

One such art-minded firm is Francis Greenburger's Time Equities, where the offices are "filled with art," said Jennie Lamensdorf, the curator of the firm's "Art in Buildings" program. Greenburger has been collecting art since the 1980s.

There are an impressive 218 pieces on display at Time Equities headquarters at 55 Fifth Avenue in Greenwich Village. From the elevator lobbies and conference rooms on floors 13 through 18 to the private offices on the 14th and 15th floors, visitors can gawk at works by dozens of traditional and modern artists, including abstract painter Kenneth Noland, color field specialist Stephen Mueller and conceptual artist Sol LeWitt.

"We strive to be a platform for artists," Lamensdorf said. "We're not trading on their name." Instead, Time Equities uses its resources to put the artists in the spotlight. "We believe in these people," she said.

Cohen Brothers Realty also has an art director managing the office collection.

Helen Varola, who was hired to find artists and artwork to fill the company's offices, especially its headquarters at 750 Lexington Avenue in Midtown, works with artists directly, as well as with galleries, when collecting.

A 2006 Christian Eckart painting hangs in the office's stairwell. "Cell, 2 Prisons, Stacked" a painting by Peter Halley, and LeWitt's "Untitled, #15, 2006," a linoleum cut monotype, are on display in President and CEO Charles Cohen's office.

Varola said it took her well over a year to collect the art at 750 Lexington, where Cohen Brothers moved in 2009.

Large art collections can be found in many more industry offices across the city. RFR Holding's Aby Rosen is a known collector. Jack Resnick & Sons, who declined to comment for this story, has a guide to its different art holdings on its website. Tishman Speyer also declined to comment on its art collection on display at its Rockefeller Center headquarters.

For Eric Benaim, the founder of Modern Spaces NYC, artwork is an integral part of the workplace. A Banksy hangs in his personal work space at the firm's Brooklyn location, along with works by sculptor Tom Friedman.

"I don't like to have any empty walls in the offices," said Benaim, who mostly collects modern and street art for both his workplace and private collections. For the Brooklyn office, Benaim commissioned a 40-foot mural by Greenpoint artist Skewville.

In Chelsea, Modern Spaces literally doubles as a gallery, where openings for new exhibitions are held every three months or so. About 30 or 40 pieces hang on the walls in Modern Spaces' five other locations.