

Inspiration Office: The Artist's New Canvas

Workplace Solutions in New Orleans partnered with local artists to create a dual-purpose showroom and art gallery.

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When artist Josh Hailey ran into Paul Maczka on the streets of New Orleans, you could say it was kismet. After 30 years in the furniture industry, Maczka was getting ready to open Workplace Solutions, a Steelcase dealer. Maczka and his wife had fallen in love with New Orleans and its rich culture. Hailey is an artist and, at the time, was ready for his next project. He was already familiar with Steelcase – his favorite mustard yellow and green couch from 1978 bared the brand's name. The two decided to work together, drawing office inspiration from the city and vibe around them. Hailey and fellow artist Brittany Schall created and curated original pieces for the showroom. They agreed to share their process and final vision with 360.

360: Why did you decide to partner with an artist?

Paul: My wife Suzanne and I are art lovers and have a lot of art in our home so it seemed natural that we have art in our workplace. I believe it's inspiring and thought provoking to be surrounded by great art. Our new space has very high ceilings, natural light and lots of exposed brick. It's located in the warehouse district of New Orleans which is home to many galleries.

360: What was the creative process like working together?

Paul: Josh and Brittany were two of the first people to see our space when it was still just an empty box. They had a vision for what they wanted to do early on. We gave them feedback on what we did and didn't like. For the most part, they had free reigns and decided on pieces and placement. We were definitely interested in reflecting the local New Orleans culture in our space.

Josh: We put a lot of thought into art, location and material. Every space in the showroom is calculated for thought, experience and comfort.

360: You use sculpture, paint and photos. How important is materiality to getting the right feel within a space?

Josh: Material and medium are everything. When I'm designing for a specific location, like Workplace Solutions, I look at products on the floor and try to marry them to the walls. The furniture and art are a special combination that need to be a perfect pairing for a great atmosphere.

360: Why do you think art is important in the workplace?

Paul: I think art enriches our lives and we spend most of our lives in the workplace. It helps establish the culture of our organization.

Josh: I think art is intrinsic for collaboration and spontaneity. I think there is an open endlessness to art on all levels that allows the viewer to be inquisitive, open and ready for discussion. It helps people push boundaries and expand their thinking.