



Art plays a lead role in Martin Scorsese's *The Departed* (2006), starring Jack Nicholson

# GONE HOLLYWOOD

## GETTING YOUR ART ON A FILM OR TV SET

BY REBECCA PAHLE

**A**s Hollywood. The glistering lights, the movie stars, the red carpet gala... For artists who have always harbored a secret desire to

break into the film industry, enrolling in potentially humbling acting classes or buying a camera you might never use are far from being your best options. As someone who has devoted your life to the creation of (non-film) art, you personally might never show up on the big screen. But your art?

That's a different story. Whether it's a painting hanging in the leading man's ranky bachelor pad or a sculpture on the coffee table of some villainous businessman's corner office, film and television set decorators have got to get their artistic requirements from somewhere.

Many movie, television and commercial productions rent—or even buy—pieces of art, be they original paintings, high-quality prints or sculptures, for use in decorating their sets.

Art rental companies—like Los Angeles' Film Art LA ([www.filmartla.com](http://www.filmartla.com)) or the New York-based Art for Film ([www.artforfilmny.com](http://www.artforfilmny.com))—assist set decorators in their hunts for high-quality art by assembling a curated selection of work culled from artist submissions. Most such companies allow artists to submit images for consideration through their Websites. If accepted, the artwork is added to the company's database of available art. (Some companies will even offer to create high-quality prints for production companies to purchase.) Any rental fees—which vary based upon the length of rental as well as the piece's size and purchase price—are then split between the company and the artist.

Many companies streamline the rental process by picking up and dropping off the art featured in their databases directly from the artist. This helps the company cut down on the need for storage space and eliminates the need for the artist to travel to some distant warehouse to retrieve a piece, should a client wish to purchase it.

Though the film and TV industries are in large part based around the dual production hubs of New York and Los Angeles, artists who live outside of those two cities aren't out of luck. In recent years, tax incentives provided by state governments have led to an increasingly large number of film

productions outside of New York and California. As more productions migrate to the other 45 states and abroad, the infrastructure needed to support them—including art rental companies—has grown, too. Boston's Lanes Film Arts ([www.lanesfilmarts.com](http://www.lanesfilmarts.com)) is one example; the company has rented art to *The Town*, *Swissgate* and a number of other movies filmed in and around Braintree.

In addition, many museums and galleries rent out pieces to the film and TV industries. Vancouver Art Gallery's Art Rental and Sales program ([www.artrentalandsales.com](http://www.artrentalandsales.com)), which also to promote local artists, holds an open call for submissions once a year.

"We look for work that reflects Vancouver's—and British Columbia's—contemporary art community and, in doing so, rep-

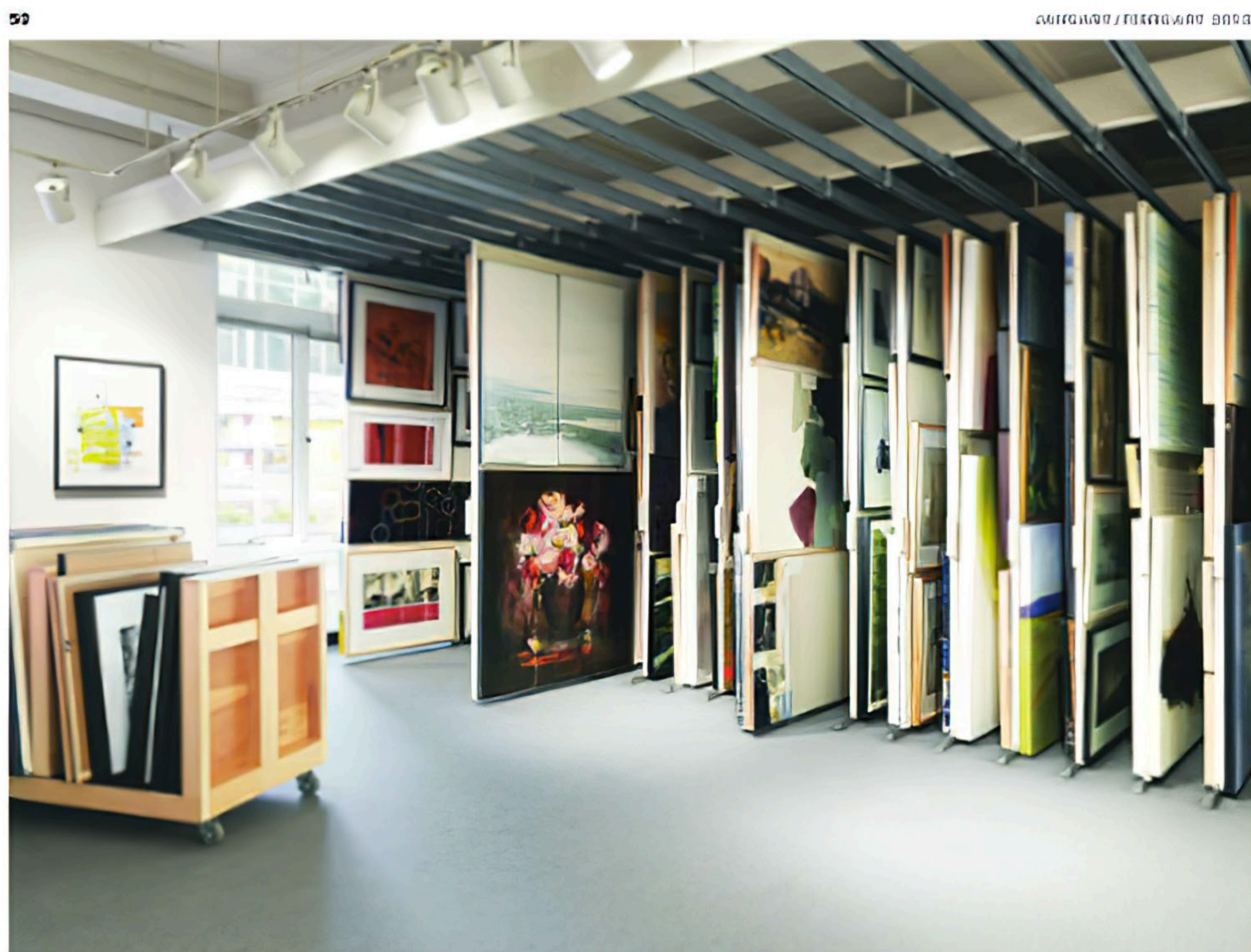
resents emerging, mid-career and established local artists," says art rental and sales manager Diana Partridge. As a nonprofit business, the Art Rental and Sales program returns the majority of the rental fees it receives back to the artists, with the remaining funds going to the Vancouver Art Gallery.

Individual artists who would rather cut out the middleman can get their art onto film and TV sets themselves, provided they're willing to put in the time and energy and are in possession of a healthy business acumen. It's even possible to turn your art's guest appearance into a recurring role, as was the case for Boston-based artist

**"CREATING A MARKET FOR YOUR WORK REQUIRES TIME AND PERSEVERANCE, TO MAKE AND NURTURE CONNECTIONS."**



Anne Silber with her artwork in *1400 Street Station*, which is depicted in Martin Scorsese's *Goodfellas* (1993) and *The Departed* (2006)



The Vancouver Art Gallery's Art Rental and Sales program ([www.artrentalandsales.com](http://www.artrentalandsales.com)). In 1990, Silber was invited to visit the set of the TV drama "thirtynothing." While there, she approached the show's set decorator and asked whether the production might be interested in buying a piece of her art for use on the show. They were. Since

then, Silber has sold hand-printed serigraphs—or silkscreen prints—of her landscapes, still lifes and abstract pieces to dozens of TV shows and movies, including Martin Scorsese's *The Departed*, "The West Wing" and "Grey's Anatomy" (the last of which is a regular purchaser of Silber's work).



While a certain amount of serendipity led to her first sale, Silber's continued success is a direct result of hard work. "Selling a [single] piece of artwork to a film or TV production can sometimes be a matter of luck," says Silber. "Creating a market for your work requires time and perseverance, to make and nurture connections."

But as Jessica Heyman, founder and director of Art for Film (which has provided art to a wide range of movies, from *Sex and the City 2* to *The Swifys*) notes, there are some factors that can make a piece of art more appropriate for life on the set.

"Medium to large format abstract work is generally more sought after than figurative [work]," says Heyman. "As a figurative piece, especially a portrait, may convey something about a character's personality or history, whereas abstract work is usually more subtle and can be more open to interpretation."

"Most decorators and designers avoid loud, bright colors," continues Heyman. "As [they can] distract from the action in the scene... You don't want background set decoration that jumps out of the background too much."

**"YOU DON'T WANT SET DECORATION THAT JUMPS OUT OF THE BACKGROUND."**

It's also important that the artist have fine-tuned business skills. "You have to be professional and easy to work with," notes Silber. "[You] also have to understand that it is not just a matter of the buyer liking your artwork; the art has to be appropriate to help define their characters and also work within the production budget."

While artists shouldn't expect to make a mint solely by renting out their artwork, any amount of money earned is no bad thing, and the benefits of having a piece of your art featured in a film or TV show go beyond just the financial. Not to be discounted are the exposure and credibility to be gained from having one's art featured in an Oscar-winning movie or on a show that millions of people watch every week. (And, of course, bragging rights.)

So even if you've never nuzzled over half-formed dreams of walking the red carpet or accepting a golden statuette, the opportunities available to artists in the film and TV industries are not to be ignored. It's simple: They need art and you're an artist. So get out there and be discovered. **ABN**

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