

The commission money was good, and the artist arrived on time. One of the executives from corporate design was there to meet her at the door. After touring the facilities, the artist was left alone to begin painting. Each day the mural materialized a bit more, section by section, spreading a ribbon of color across the large gray wall at the end of the lobby. First a green patch of forest glade appeared, two blossoming plum trees, three sky blue vistas, and a Cheshire cat on a branch. Finally came the day when the tarp would fall. Employees gathered around plastic cups and croissants. When the speeches were over, the room grew hushed for the unveiling. The crowd gasped. The wall came alive with paradise, an intricate world of multicolored shapes. Several employees lingered to chat with the artist. Once the congratulations died down, the artist strolled to the center of the mural, stopping where the garden path leads into the forest, and with her face to the crowd, she smiled, bowed, and turned her back. Walking into the green leaves, she was never seen again.