

America's Hotels & Resorts: More Art-Aware than Ever

BY CAROLYN K. BOGUSZ AND MAX GILLIES



The lobby of the Wort Hotel, Jackson, Wyoming



Throughout modern history, hotels and resorts have incorporated artworks into their décor. Their collections have been established for many purposes: to reflect the region's landscape and culture, to associate the establishment with a style or theme in vogue, or to offer a new guest experience. This trend continues today, as historic hospitality venues focus on preserving and highlighting their cherished artworks, while new and renovated hotels and resorts showcase innovative installations and provide services targeted to art aficionados.

Members of the **Historic Hotels of America** network welcome guests coast to coast. Many of the 244 properties possess notable collections, and one of the most impressive resides at the **Pfister Hotel** in Milwaukee. Opened in 1883 by Guido Pfister, this landmark is particularly admired for the 19th-century European and American paintings hanging in its public spaces. Highlights include major works by Daniel Ridgway Knight and native Milwaukeean Louis Mayer.

In downtown Denver, the **Oxford Hotel** has hosted artists seeking to capture the spirit of the Rocky Mountain Region ever since it opened in 1891. As luck would have it, many of these artists were truly "starving" and thus traded artworks



Aerial view of the Greenbrier in White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia
Photo courtesy Greenbrier



for accommodations; John Fery's *Panoramic Mountain Landscape* was acquired for the hotel in just this manner. Also here are paintings by Denver's best-known artist-in-residence, Charles Partridge Adams (1858-1942).

By partnering with the **West Lives On Gallery** right across the street, the **Wort Hotel** in Jackson, Wyoming, can offer visitors an ever-changing array of contemporary paintings and sculptures highlighting the early American West, including works by John Coleman and Tim Shinabarger. On long-term loan from the Tom Christie Collection is a series of prints by John Ford Clymer (1907-1989), who won fame for his depictions of frontier settlements and landscapes. Works in the Wort's permanent collection include *At Teton Park* by Jackson's first resident artist, Harrison Crandall, as well as *Pioneer Overlooks Snake River* by James Ralston.

RESORTS

It goes almost without saying that luxury resorts have long attracted affluent guests, who are often art lovers, too. That's one reason some of these properties not only display art, but also offer on-site galleries where guests can acquire a lasting memory of their visit.

Fine Art Connoisseur readers headed to Phoenix this winter will surely enjoy a visit to the **Royal Palms Resort**, constructed in 1929 as a winter retreat for New York City financier Delos Cooke and his wife, Florence. This couple decorated their home with pieces acquired during their extensive travels in Europe and Latin America, and many of them remain on display today in the resort's public spaces and guest rooms. In the winter and spring, visitors enjoy the additional treat of watching weekly demonstrations by contemporary artists participating in the **Celebration of Fine Art** in nearby Scottsdale. This season, works by Jennifer O'Cualain, Paul Rhymer, and Becky Joy will capture different aspects of Arizona's ever-changing desert scenery.

Nestled on Sunset Mountain outside Asheville, North Carolina, is the lovely **Grove Park Inn**. Now part of Omni Hotels and Resorts, this

property celebrated its centenary in 2013. It was built by Edwin W. Grove and his son-in-law, Frank Seely; four years after it opened, Seely purchased Biltmore Estate Industries from Asheville's most famous resident, Mrs. George Washington (Edith) Vanderbilt II, changed its name to Biltmore Industries, and constructed new facilities adjacent to the hotel that would house the artisans and craftsmen Vanderbilt and her late husband had employed to build what remains the largest house in America, Biltmore. Grove Park Inn guests still visit the **Grove Park Studios**, where artists create sculpture, furniture, glass, and other work.

Founded in 1778, the **Greenbrier** resort in White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia, served as a temporary hospital during both the Civil War and World War II. Beginning in 1946, its décor was

Jennifer O'Cualain (b. 1971)

Nine

2013, Oil on linen, 28 x 90 in.

On view in the Cervantes Lounge of the Royal Palms Resort, Phoenix





completely re-envisioned by the famous Manhattan-based designer Dorothy Draper; her bold yet classic look has been sustained and gently tweaked by her protégé, Carleton Varney. Some of the oldest buildings on the property are the cottages on Alabama Row, now home to the Art Colony Shops. This past November, the Greenbrier hosted its first Fine Art Week, offering guests opportunities to observe acclaimed landscape artists capturing the grounds' lush ambiance. Guests and locals are also welcome to explore the **Walls Gallery**, which handles paintings by such contemporary masters as Charles Movalli, Tim Bell, and G. Russell Case.

Moving west, the **Broadmoor** in Colorado Springs is a 3,000-acre resort built in 1918 by entrepreneur Spencer Penrose, who also helped develop other regional landmarks, including the Pikes Peak Highway. Not so well-known is the fact that he and his wife helped establish and donated the buildings for the Broadmoor Art Academy, which blossomed into what is now the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center and its Bemis School of Art. Murals abound inside the Broadmoor Hotel, and one of the most notable appears in the Blue Room; here the Italian artisans who painted the angels felt the figures were looking too perfect, so they reversed their big and little toes so as not to offend God! Many of

these murals have been restored to their original glory, while local muralist Mickey Baxter-Spade has painted several ceilings and walls around the complex. Also on view around the property are paintings loaned by Denver's American Museum of Western Art — The Anschutz Collection. Guests should be sure to visit both locations of the **Broadmoor Galleries**, one featuring more traditional subject matter and the other Western, wildlife, and sporting themes. Among the artists represented here are such notables as Benjamin Wu, Clyde Aspevig, and Joseph Lorusso.

Education and personal enrichment are key missions at the historic **Ocean House** in Watch Hill, Rhode Island, where guests can explore the collection of more than 350 works dating from the 19th century through the 1990s, thanks to current owners Charles and Deborah Royce. The resort has recently acquired a series of five murals by Ludwig Bemelmans, best-known for his charming *Madeline* books, as well as two more he made to adorn the playroom of the late Christina Onassis on her family's yacht. Ocean House also operates an artist-in-residence program that allows guests to observe the creative process of nationally ranked artists. And it partners with **Lily Pad Gallery**, which highlights such realists as Yana Movchan, John C. Traynor, and George Van Hook in the



Peter Layne Arguimbau (b. 1951)

Large Gaff Class, 2001 America's Cup Jubilee, Cowes, England

2012, Oil on panel, 24 x 36 in.

Lily Pad Gallery, on view at the Ocean House, Watch Hill, Rhode Island

modern and contemporary stars. Especially impressive is the enormous bronze chambered nautilus installed in the lobby by British sculptor Tony Cragg.

In Pennsylvania, the **Lancaster Arts Hotel** is a historic warehouse that has been deftly renovated to serve as a focal point for the city's revitalized downtown. The ground-floor gallery features revolving displays from the collection, and guests can admire original artworks, all available for sale, in the 63 guest rooms. Lancaster was home to the great modernist painter Charles Demuth, and the hotel is within walking distance of the Demuth Museum.

One of America's newest art-centric boutique hotels is the **Quin**, which opened in November in midtown Manhattan. Once home to such talents as Georgia O'Keeffe, Marc Chagall, and the musician Ignacy Jan Paderewski, the hotel has launched its exhibitions program with the Swedish-born artist Daniel Egnéus, well-known for his vibrant drawings in ink and watercolor.

As you can see, art abounds at hospitality venues across the United States. Indeed, this is just a sampling of the options available to *Fine Art Connoisseur* readers as they plan trips for 2014. Have fun exploring! ■

Information: historichotels.org, thepfisterhotel.com, theoxfordhotel.com, worthotel.com, westliveson.com, royalpalmshotel.com, celebrateart.com, groveparkinn.com, greenbrier.com, wallsgallery.com, broadmoor.com, broadmoorgalleries.com, oceanhouser.com, lily-padgallery.com, jrusselljinishiangallery.com, 21cmuseumhotels.com, thejouledallas.com, lancasterartshotel.com, thequinhotel.com

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lobby and downstairs gallery, as well as with **J. Russell Jinishian Gallery**, which handles the marine paintings of, among many others, former Ocean House artist-in-residence Russ Kramer.

RENOVATED LANDMARKS

In downtown Louisville, Kentucky, the contemporary art collectors Laura Lee Brown and Steve Wilson have drawn national attention for repurposing a group of 19th-century tobacco and bourbon warehouses into a boutique hotel and contemporary art museum. Since this property's grand opening in 2006, their **21c Museum Hotels** brand has opened two more properties, in Bentonville, Arkansas, and in Cincinnati. All three sites provide privileged access to the region's rich cultural activities, and also feature multimillion-dollar collections of contemporary art displayed in exhibitions and as site-specific installations. Represented in the company's collection are Chuck Close, sculptor Christyl Bolger, and the Cracking Art Group's whimsical red, yellow and green penguins.

Located within walking distance of downtown Dallas's impressive new arts district, the **Joule Hotel** is a revitalized landmark housing a collection of original art by Andy Warhol, Richard Phillips, and other



The Atrium Gallery of Louisville's 21c Museum Hotel; photo: Kenneth Hayden