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ROOM WITH A VIEW

*It's no longer enough to have a hotel room with a window to the world; today's travelers want spectacular art inside as well as stunning vistas outside. **Mark Ellwood** checks out 10 of the top artistic boltholes*

Most hotels have a few photos or paintings scattered around the lobby and on corridor walls – it's a quick, simple way to telegraph chic sophistication at low cost. But a few spots have gone further, transforming themselves wholesale into temples or tributes to the art world. Broadly speaking, they fall into two distinct categories: one, hotel-as-gallery, where the owner repurposes public spaces expressly to showcase his or her collection; the other, hotel-as-artwork, where an owner invites artists to create site-specific works or act as guerrilla interior designers. And though the two types are equally glamorous, their origins are radically different.



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The hotel-as-gallery phenomenon started, according to Joan Warren-Grady, in the late 1980s. And she should know: Warren-Grady is an art adviser who, in the past 20 years, has become renowned as the foremost hotel collection curator, having worked on more than 200 properties. She believes art hotels emerged during the economic downturn of the late 1980s, when investors – many of them in then recession-proof Japan – snapped up bargain basement real estate and art in equal numbers and threw them together as much from circumstance as design. When the condo-hotel concept emerged in the 1990s, art became even more important. “Developers could have unique collections which identified their properties, and it creates a powerful visual memory of the hotel and the guest’s stay,” Warren-Grady observes.

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