







## hotel, um ... art?

don't be a snob: some of the finest collections in the world are housed at five-star resorts and hotels. here, a report on how to curate a world-class collection

It's a reception area in a commercial hotel, and yet guests are mesmerized by an abstract landscape in which sunlight and water blur into a blissful haze, creating a scene that seems to extend into eternity. In a lobby lounge, a painting depicts a dignified egret standing at attention on a ceramic bowl turned upside down, surrounded by majestic clouds. Then, in three separate areas — a concierge desk, bar and restaurant — an entirely different selection of elegant artworks draws more admiring gazes, resulting in a visual feast.

That's the scene at The Ritz-Carlton, Palm Beach, where an art collection procured by Joan Warren-Grady, of the Joan Warren-Grady Art Advisory in San Diego, adds another dimension to The Ritz-Carlton experience for guests. Having completed art projects for more than 200 hotel properties over some 25 years, Warren-Grady was retained by The Ritz-Carlton, Palm Beach to update the property's art collection while remaining true to the resort's history and character. In 2002, she completed a similar commission for The Ritz-Carlton New York, Central Park.

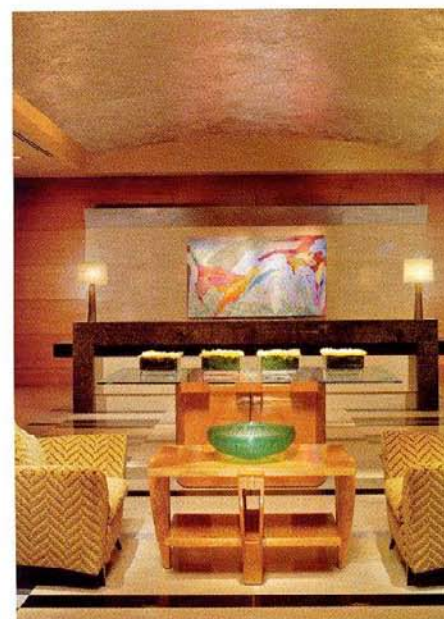
Warren-Grady sees her role very much as that of a curator. "I'm creating an exhibition," she says. "These collections need to be appropriate in size and scale to the spaces they occupy. Further, the collections need to be true to their surroundings, whether in Palm Beach or Manhattan. I want to give viewers an experience they wouldn't have otherwise, so that, in addition to staying in a great hotel, they feel that they have visited a great museum."

As with the Central Park property, Warren-Grady turned to the works of, among other artists, Steve Hannock, who produced the landscape with the sunlight and water. Considered among the foremost contemporary landscape painters, Hannock builds up layers of images on the canvas and then sands them down to provide a sense of stunning depth. The ethereal effect, Warren-Grady says, suggests light culled from memories of other times and places. By the concierge desk, Lita Albuquerque's *Gold Leaf on Panel* is a four-sectioned piece that invites guests to view the same scene with different forms of dazzling lighting and texture. "It is a sculpture that evokes sea life," Warren-Grady says. "It's very fitting for the collection in Palm Beach."

Another delight for Palm Beach guests is found in the property's Presidential Suite, where artist/designer Robert Tabor — whose résumé includes creations for MTV, Macy's, Nickelodeon and Mattel — has come up with a collection of "First Lady" inaugural ball-style shoes crafted from sculpting clays, foams, fabrics, pearls, feathers and other materials. The shoes include those "worn" by first ladies Hillary Clinton, Betty Ford and Martha Washington. (Actually, they're recreated sculptures based on Tabor's imagination of each lady's personal style.)

### LEAVE SHOES BY THE DOOR, IF YOU'RE MARRIED TO THE PRESIDENT

At The Ritz-Carlton, Westchester, another collection that's generating excitement includes noted artworks such as *Folding In* by Herb Jackson



Left: *Egret & Apples* by David Kroll graces the lobby lounge at The Ritz-Carlton, Palm Beach. Above: The Ritz-Carlton, Westchester.



Robert Tabor — whose résumé includes creations for MTV, Macy's, Nickelodeon and Mattel — has come up with a clever collection of "First Lady" inaugural ball-style shoes crafted from sculpting clays, foams, fabrics, pearls, feathers and other materials. Shown top to bottom, shoes made for Hillary Clinton, Jacqueline Kennedy and Martha Washington.



and *Winter Lake* by Michael Mazur in the main lobby, *Trifle with Me*, 2005 and *Rug Cutter*, 2002 by Laurie Fendrich, and three untitled works by Robert Ferrandini, all in The Ritz-Carlton Suite. The collection was assembled by esteemed hotel interior designer Frank Nicholson of Acton, Mass., who sought a way to enhance the property's contemporary urban vibe with a highly international flavor. Public areas built around clean, modern-looking woods, granite and limestone have been filled with artworks and sculptures by both modern masters such as Frank Stella and David Hockney and emerging artists such as Mazur and Guy Dill. Stella's *The Quarter Deck*, for example, is an inviting bath of color and image, in a lively mix of both geometric and abstract shapes. Dill's bronze *Hayden* sculpture seems to leap from a twisting, wood framed stairwell, looming large in a sensual dance of joy.

"The collection has an energy that relates to the spirit of today's Ritz-Carlton," Nicholson says. "We base our decisions on designs that are high-quality artwork, not merely decoration.

Our artwork collections are assembled to appeal not only to the casual observer, but also to hotel guests who are knowledgeable about artwork and will appreciate and recognize the artists represented."

Hotel guests have taken notice and are lavishing praise upon the property for its displays.

"Beautiful artwork is reflective of the stunning décor and contemporary design of The Ritz-Carlton, Westchester," says Jacqueline Sanders, general manager of the property. "Guests tell me that when they enter our lobby, they feel as though they are walking into someone's home. Each work has been carefully chosen for its place in our hotel to evoke warmth and a comfortable, yet elegant, feeling."

#### POP AND CIRCUMSTANCE

At The Ritz-Carlton, Millenia Singapore, guests feast their eyes on a luscious collection featuring Frank Stella, Dale Chihuly, David Hockney and Henry Moore, among others.

In the entrance area, *The Cornucopia* dominates. It's Stella's suspended three-ton roof sculpture of weaving and inter-weaving spirals of fiberglass.

Commanding guests' attention in the Chihuly Lounge are two large and ornate wall sculptures by the glass artist, one of the world's foremost. Viewed from afar, each looks like a burst of flames — one in various hues of yellows named *Sunrise* and the other with various yellows and greens named *Sunset*. Up close, these works, each made with 40,000 square feet of Tiffany-style glass, appear as closely related yet separate organic forms. *Sunrise* has nearly 300 yellow hand-blown glass spirals. They come alive especially in the evening when subtle lighting brings out their full depth.

Also in the Chihuly Lounge is *Balinese Dancer*, by award-winning Indonesian artist Nyoman Gunarsa, situated there to celebrate the resort's daily entertainments. Within the canvas of this abstract painting, dancers emerge and draw viewers into their sensual and secret world.

These pieces are but a few standouts in the hotel's 4,200-piece collection (valued at \$5 million and considered to be among the finest corporate art collections in Southeast Asia). Ninety percent of the works were specially commissioned for the hotel, including 350 museum-quality pieces meant to complement the building's modern architecture.

Guests may explore the collection through a self-guided podcast tour that reveals fascinating tidbits as they come to understand what makes most of these pieces "pop art," the American art style that dates to the 1960s. How each work and its artist complement the modern design of the hotel is sure to fascinate. ■