

THE ART OF A HOTEL HOLIDAY

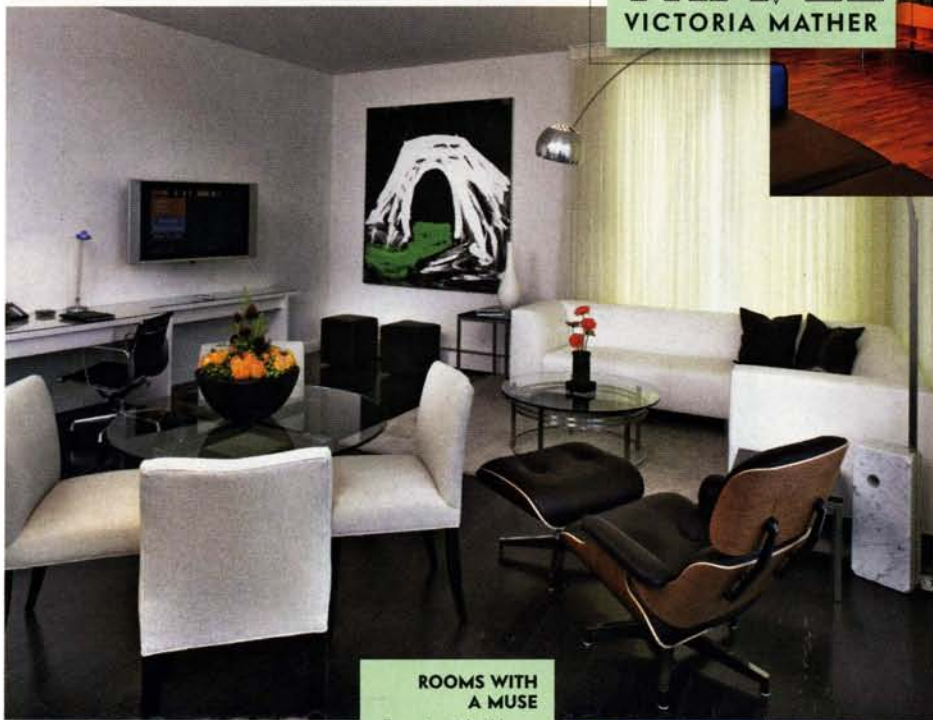
here is an answer to the eternal question “What is art?” Art is the new hotel accessory: bigger than the iPod docking station, better than a private swimming pool in your suite, more ego-boosting than any plasma screen or Gaggia espresso machine. It is no longer enough to sleep in Frette linens; you have to sleep in a museum.

Steve Wynn is to blame. It was Wynn who realized the synergy between art and hotelism when he opened the **Bellagio**, in Las Vegas, and brought his formidable art collection with him. The hotel’s gallery of Impressionist paintings became as sensational on the Strip as Cirque du Soleil’s *O* show. And at his newest hotel, the **Wynn Las**

white-white look for the bold colors used by artist **Julian Schnabel**.

At the **21c Museum Hotel**, in Louisville, Kentucky, owners **Steve Wilson** and **Laura Lee Brown** want guests to interact with art. At check-in they walk over a video installation of **Abbas Kiarostami’s** *Sleepers*, which shows a couple sleeping in a bed. Waiting for the elevator is the artistic equivalent of being on hallucinogenic drugs: random letters fall down the wall and collect around your reflection—**Camille Utterback** and **Romy Achituv’s** video *Text Rain*. There is an untitled

TRAVEL VICTORIA MATHER



installation of lights by **Ivan Navarro** on the elevator’s ceiling. And the bedrooms have 42-inch HDTVs that display the hotel’s video installations, while the lobby contains paintings, photography, video art, and sculptures from artists such as **Elena Dorfman**, **Bill Viola**, and—again—**Sam Taylor-Wood**.

The live-in-art outbreak has even reached Tasmania, Australia, where the **Henry Jones Art Hotel**, designed within an old jam factory in Hobart, has works by native artists, an Art Installation Suite, and access to emerging talent from the local Tasmanian School of Art. The scene’s so accessible you can view the entire collection online. **Gordon Campbell Gray’s** *One Aldwych*, in London, is a mini Tate Modern, with some 400 pictures and sculptures, including the massive *Boatman with Oars*, by **Andre Wallace**, in the bar; a montage of 192 pieces of toast sunk into wax, by **Tracey Davidson**; and **Justine Smith’s** papier-mâché dog, made of “Beano” comics, at reception.

If your heart doesn’t belong to Dada, there is one serene oasis of traditional art with a unique historical record. **The Imperial**, in Delhi, was built in 1934 to a design by **F. B. Blomfield**, one of **Sir Edwin Lutyens’s** associates. It is a museum hotel, with its own curator, and thousands of engravings, etchings, lithographs, and oil paintings of the British Raj. And there’s nothing quite like the magnificent maharajas, the viceroys, the durbars, the pig-sticking and tiger-hunting scenes, nor like waking in the Royal Imperial Suite to see hollow silver armchairs and a dramatic lithograph of an elephant fight. There’s the largest collection of land-war gallantry medals awarded in India and her neighboring countries. For the price of a room, you’re living with art history—no museum distance between you and it. The art-hotel phenomenon is like staying in someone’s house, with art one can’t afford but is temporarily one’s own—and better lit.

Vegas, Picasso’s *Le Rêve* circulated throughout the property before the hotelier inadvertently stuck his elbow through it. There is no gallery; rather, the art has been distributed throughout the hotel because, as architect **David Rockwell** says, “people don’t want culture in prescribed pockets.”

Rockwell has designed the new **Chambers Hotel**, in Minneapolis, where owner **Ralph Burnet** houses art from his private collection, which includes more than 200 contemporary pieces by artists such as **Tracey Emin** and **Sam Taylor-Wood**. Forget its walk-in rain showers or the new **Jean-Georges Vongerichten** restaurant—this hotel has **Damien Hirst’s** *Judas Iscariot* in a glass case. Rockwell also designed **Chambers New York**, where the owners, art-hotel pioneers **Ira Druker** and **Richard Born**, recently hung contemporary pieces reflecting the *Zeitgeist* in China. And over at the **Gramercy Park Hotel**, **Ian Schrager** ditched his old white-

ROOMS WITH A MUSE

From top: the Henry Jones Art Hotel lobby, with art by Lindsay Broughton; the Rock Star Suite at the Chambers Minneapolis, with art by Ryusei Mizuno; the 21c Museum Hotel’s lobby, with art by Judy Fox, Michael Oatman, and Nicolas Lampert.

