



Conde Nast Traveller UK – May 2011

# Bulletin

The wider world of travel: How to get home in one piece ★ Art hotels ★ Zimbabwe

**H**OTELS HAVE long served as galleries, exhibiting a wide range of art, from ancient Egyptian relics (at Barcelona's Claris hotel) to contemporary paintings (notably at Hyatt hotels, owned by inveterate collectors the Pritzker family). But a more recent phenomenon is hotels where art is not only displayed but created, too.

Everywhere from Shanghai to the Caribbean – and particularly in the USA – hotels are converting suites into studios in which artists are invited to paint, sculpt, photograph and even tattoo. 'Residencies' of weeks or even months give artists the space and time to produce works that are hung in the hotel and often sold to guests.

'Residencies are a way for hotels not just to support the arts financially, but to become physically involved, too,' says Doreen Remen, co-founder of the New York-based Art Production Fund (APF). 'And because of the nature of hotels, the guests are like a built-in audience, interacting with the artists and inspiring their work.'

APF pairs artists with high-profile hotels such as The Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas, which opened last December. It oversaw the creation of the hotel's entire art collection, which includes pieces by Yoko Ono and LED-artist Leo Villareal; and it also facilitated the residency of Fab 5 Freddy (real name Fred Brathwaite), a graffiti artist and pioneering hip-hop musician who spent three weeks at the Cosmopolitan working on a series of oversized photographs of boxers and showgirls encrusted with Swarovski crystals.

Brathwaite worked in a dedicated studio/gallery near the Cosmopolitan's main gambling floor. He describes ➤



Artist David Le Batard (LEBO) during his residency at the W Retreat & Spa, Vieques Island

## GUEST ARTIST

Hotels around the world are inviting painters, sculptors and photographers to take up residence and create works of art. **David Kaufman** reports

## Bulletin



Zach Saucedo at work in his studio at The Fairmont Dallas hotel

➤ the experience as 'surreal'. Thousands of visitors passed by as he worked, he said, and 'people were so curious about the pieces that we had to call for security to control the crowds'.

Brathwaite's is the first of three planned Cosmopolitan residencies this year. Remen says that all the artists will produce work 'inspired by the hotel, its architecture and Las Vegas itself'.

With nearly 3,000 guest rooms, the \$3.9-billion Cosmopolitan clearly has the capacity for permanent art-studio space. So does the 545-room Fairmont Dallas hotel, which last year launched a rotating artist-in-residence programme. The artists – painter Zach Saucedo followed this year by furniture-maker Sean Springer – lived and worked at the hotel for three months. At the end of their stay, each left a piece of work which has been added to the hotel's permanent collection.

In New York, the 135-room Marcel at Gramercy hotel transformed a conventional guest room into a temporary 'Ink Suite' to host Los Angeles-based tattoo artist Mister Cartoon (real name Mark Machado), who has worked on Beyoncé Knowles, Justin Timberlake and footballer Fredrik Ljungberg, for two 10-day residencies last year. Arriving with an assistant and a pair of tattoo guns, he 'inked' hotel guests as well as members

of the New York Yankees and Rangers sports teams. For Machado, who usually operates from a warehouse in downtown LA, the atmosphere of the hotel proved beneficial. 'The work I do offers no room for error,' he says. 'The comfortable hotel environment helped put me in a creative frame of mind.'

At beach resorts, artist-in-residence activities tend to be more casual. In Puerto Rico, at the W Retreat & Spa, Vieques Island (see page 131), Miami-based artist David Le Batard lived and painted throughout the property for a month, in the lobby, at the beach and on a cliff fronting the Caribbean. Not only did this introduce collectors to his work, says Le Batard (aka LEBO), it also gave him a respite from the solitude of his usual creative process.

The 'hotel with artists' concept is to get a further boost in a forthcoming hotel in China. The new Swatch Art Peace Hotel, set to open for the summer in Shanghai, will have 18 loft-like artists' studios. The artists, whose residencies will last from two to six months, will be selected by a panel including businessman and art collector François Pinault, Swatch CEO Nick Hayek and actor George Clooney. As at the Fairmont, completed works will be donated to the hotel and go into its permanent art collection.

Curiously, a different kind of hotel/artspace closed just as the concept was catching on. But this one, in Berlin, had an unusual twist. The so-called 'Hotel Marienbad' opened in 2008 within the KW Institute for Contemporary Art. It was an exhibition space in which artists including Turner Prize-winner Douglas Gordon were invited to live and work. However, the gallery felt the idea had run its course by the end of last year, and Hotel Marienbad was closed. 