

Customized interiors make hotel room feel like home

Susan Balcom

The ritzy Listel Vancouver Hotel makes a special effort to decorate each room individually and with taste.



Where can you find really good decorating ideas? If you're a high-end traveller, you might try your hotel room.

It's become something of a trend for quality hotels to customize their guest rooms to create that desirable home-away-from-home feeling. Spend a night in one of these elegantly furnished rooms and chances are you'll come away lusting after the goose down duvet or the antique roll-top desk.

Vancouver interior designer Judy Henderson, who decorated two floors of rooms at the Listel Vancouver around an art gallery theme, says guests in customized hotels often see things they'd like for their own homes.

"Because we are trying to bridge the gap between residential and hotel, the rooms often look very residential, although they have the durability of a hotel room," Henderson says. "In some cases, you get hotels where they have gift shops that are selling the same

furniture and accessories you see in your room."

At the Listel, the designer rooms have all been decorated individually, with different collections of furniture ranging from traditional to contemporary styles.

Each room, as well, boasts several original paintings supplied by the Buschlen Mowatt Gallery in Vancouver. Among the more notable artists represented: Henry Moore, Sorel Etrog, Yehouda Chaki, Ross Penhall, Tapiés, Dante Marioni, Otto Rogers and Pat Service. Altogether, the hotel has close to half a million dollars of art on display, in the front lobby and in the "gallery rooms."

Guests, of course, pay more for the designer touch. In peak season, a standard room costs \$220, while the gallery rooms go for \$320. The majority of clients are people travelling on business.

Although the art work helps to set the tone for each room, the furniture and fixtures actually came first, Henderson says. Then, if the art is sold or



GALLERY SUITE: Newly-renovated Listel Vancouver Hotel features art by Canadian painter Carmelo Sortino.

moved, it won't be necessary to also change the furniture, or the draperies and carpets.

In each room, a concerted effort has been made to avoid the generic hotel look, where countless suites of matching furniture are bought direct from a manufacturer. The furniture came from various suppliers and includes one-of-a-kind pieces such as a 1940s art deco bar unit found in an antique store.

Henderson says because of the detail work in the bar unit, it would have been difficult to duplicate. "Nowadays, it's really expensive to reproduce that kind of detail, so the antiques actually work out to be a really

good deal."

And it's not just the furniture that has received special attention. The headboards on the beds were individually designed, in materials ranging from velvet fabric to sculpted metal. In the sitting areas of some rooms, the neutral coloured carpets were inlaid with coloured patterns. And occasional lamps were purchased at local stores, including IKEA, just as anyone would do for their own home.

"Even though the rooms are traditional we wanted to mix things up and make it more eclectic," Henderson says. "It doesn't look as typically coordinated. That makes it look



IAN LINDSAY/Vancouver Sun

ART DECO: Interior designer Judy Henderson displays an antique art deco style bar unit at a suite in the Listel Vancouver.

more high-end."

The contemporary art also contributes to the designer look. A spinoff benefit for the art gallery involved is being able to show their clients the

various paintings in a room setting.

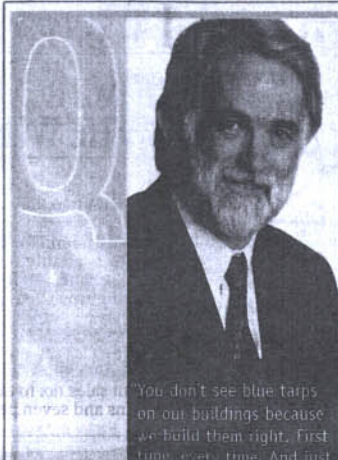
Listel sales manager Lise Magee estimates more than 30,000 people will see the art over a period of a year.

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