

Artful Amenities Draw Guests to Hotels

IT LOOKS LIKE A NOOK in an art gallery, this sitting room in a small suite at the Listel Vancouver. Two exceptional original oil paintings hang on the wall, carefully and discreetly lit by overhead track lights. The room's



decor is elegant but subdued, in beige and muted pastels, shaped in clean, modern lines so the color

points that catch the eye are the artworks, not the armchairs. If you dim the room lights and leave the track lights up, the paintings stand out even more, splashes of color in a rich gloom. Just like a gallery.

Actually, the room is an art gallery. The idea Listel hotel management concocted early this year is so exquisitely clever that, as with all obviously worthwhile innovations, you wonder why it took so long to think of. The Listel has contracted with two Vancouver fine-art galleries, Buschlen Mowatt and Keith Alexander, to install works by well-known Canadian and international artists in guestrooms and hallways on two hotel floors. These Gallery Floors feature C\$500,000 worth of paintings and sculpture, ranging from modern depictional to post-modern abstract to Northwest Coast First Nations. The overall effect is to elevate the Listel several notches on the elegance scale.

A four-diamond property since its opening in 1986, the 130-room Listel offers an excellent location for leisure travelers. The hotel is on Robson, just five minutes from Stanley Park, in the heart of the famed shopping/nightlife/people-watching district. The hotel also features amenities such as a spacious pool/exercise complex on the lower level, and the restaurant, O'Doul's (once the name of the hotel, as well) is a well-known chop-house/jazz piano bar—a favorite early-evening stop before a show or concert. There's a small but



well-stocked cigar emporium in the lobby arcade, near the bar. The impetus is enormous to enjoy an evening stroll along Robson, followed by a good steak or grilled-fish dinner and an hour or two in the bar listening to smoky jazz.

Outside, cheery visitors clatter along, weaving an aural kaleidoscope of the dozen languages you're bound to hear in Vancouver. Inside, a songstress in a black evening gown rasps a tale of urban love. This sort of atmosphere can be found at several Vancouver hotels, but only the Listel can offer fine art as the evening's denouement when you repair to your room. Entering is like walking into a software magnate's city penthouse, with lights playing on the art and shadows burnishing the sumptuous furniture.

In my room, the Carmelo Sortino still-life depictions of fruit are vivid, sharp, intense. Sortino is one of the Northwest's hottest up-and-coming artists, and his expressionist style is redefining the still life, just as his paintings are

Ambience is important at the Listel Vancouver, which has created special Gallery Floors with rooms that feature works by well-known artists.

by Eric Lucas