

art scene and heard

The 'China Design Now' exhibition highlights Portland's urban creativity

By John Gottberg Anderson • / For The Bulletin

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Restaurants and hotels

A Stephen Hayes work hung on the wall of the tiny northeast Portland restaurant known as DOC when I dined one night on chicken, farfalle and wild mushrooms. Many Portland restaurants, I learned, are huge supporters of the arts. Even in this intimate space, which handles no more than two dozen people at a seating — and whose entrance is directly through the kitchen — original art is a central attraction.

Bruce Carey, a Portland restaurateur, is a leading proponent. Carey (whose restaurants include Bluehour, Saucebox, 23Hoyt and Clarklewis) has a master's degree in arts administration and sits on the board of trustees of the Portland Institute for Contemporary Art. Part of his eclectic personal collection of prints, photographs and paintings hangs on the walls and along the stairwell at 23Hoyt.

Other fine-dining restaurants throughout the city proudly display art collections. Even the newly reopened Brasserie Montmartre, a jazz club and French restaurant, has framed crayon-on-butcher paper works created by patrons in its previous incarnation. (It had closed in 2006.)

Support for the arts extends to Portland hotels as well. Hotel Lucia has an extensive art collection highlighted by the donated works of Pulitzer Prize-winning photojournalist David Hume Kennerly. The Hotel Monaco offers packages that include a curator's tour of that boutique hotel's art collection as well as the Portland Art Museum itself.

The Nines, a luxurious new property overlooking the Pioneer Courthouse, features a spectacular collection of paintings, sculpture and textile art selected by Paige Powell, a Portlander who for years was Andy Warhol's personal assistant in New York. Even the more traditional Westin Portland hotel gives special attention to its art collection, inspired by owner Gordon Sondland, whose personal collection of Northwest art extends from the lobby to the guest rooms.

Although the visual art isn't as stunning at the modest Mark Spencer Hotel, it, too, has strong ties to Portland's arts community. For years now, the Mark has been a host hotel for actors, musicians and other artists visiting the city on short or extended stays. As an apartment-style inn, the Mark offers a variety of packages that include admission to concerts, plays, operas and arts exhibits.