

# ART ON VACATION

Tourists may be surprised to find plenty of places to enjoy fine art on the Las Vegas Strip and beyond

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*Vegas.com*

Art is everywhere in Las Vegas. There's the in-your-face decorative stuff, like the hotel's ornate door handles and colorful carpets or the overwhelming plethora of neon signs.

But there's also a fair amount of fine art.

The trick is finding it.

As Anne Kellogg of the Las Vegas Art Museum (LVAM) explains, the Las Vegas art scene is unique from other cities' art scenes — much of the fine art here is hidden in nooks and crannies.

"You have the neon and these wild and crazy themes and ideas, and it's all sort of coming together with this big 'kapow.' But when it comes to fine art, you've got to look," said Kellogg. "And that's kind of a beautiful thing, because it's a surprise — a nice surprise. It's going to be a little more subtle, which is unusual because in other cities it's the opposite — the art is the big 'kapow' and everything else is subtle."

In other words, Las Vegas is an absolute art destination. But like most other things in Vegas, it's different from any other art destination anywhere in the world.

## A HAPPY ACCIDENT IN ART

There comes a time in every tourist's Vegas vacation when it's necessary to take a break from doubling down — perhaps to seek out some sustenance, drain the ATM or rush to the box office before your show tickets are given away to the anxious couple in the standby line.

For those who happen to be gambling in or near the Bellagio, there's another option: perusing fine art.

While tourists in other cities may make an art museum their thing-to-do of the day, in Las Vegas, a gallery like the Bellagio Gallery of Fine Art (BGFA), is often more of a happy accident.

"It's an interesting and unique situation," explained Gallery Manager Tarissa Tiberti. "Some people who maybe wouldn't go into a museum just happen to find us when walking along and taking a break from the casino."

BGFA, which opened in 1998, showcases exhibitions by some of the world's most renowned artists. It will launch its newest exhibition, "Classic Contemporary: Lichtenstein, Warhol & Friends," on Jan. 23. Organized in partnership with the



Courtesy photo  
Much of Steve Wynn's private collection has found a home at one time or another at his luxury hotel Wynn Las Vegas, including the Rembrandt above.

Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego (MCASD), the exhibition will feature paintings and sculpture by artists including Roy Lichtenstein, Sol LeWitt, Andy Warhol, Frank Stella, Ellsworth Kelly and Ed Ruscha.

"Working with MCASD and having the opportunity to present such incredible works of art, has been a phenomenal experience for BGFA," said Michele C. Quinn, curatorial advisor for MGM Mirage. "We are excited about this chance to bridge the gallery's past exhibitions with future ones while still being true to the core of BGFA's mission

of showing only the best." Some hotels, for instance, are almost like art museums. Fine works are on display in many of the rooms, including the unexpected ones like the poker room and the bathroom.

At the Bellagio, glass sculptor Dale Chihuly's Fiori di Como hangs above the lobby. The hotel's Picasso restaurant surrounds diners with an extensive collection of original Picasso artwork. The theater lobby for Cirque du Soleil's "O" showcases bronze sculptures of dancers and acrobats by master sculptor Richard MacDonald.

Quality art is also prevalent throughout Steve Wynn's luxury hotels Wynn Las Vegas and Encore. Wynn himself has an extensive art collection, which at one time or another has included paintings by Paul Gauguin, Vincent van Gogh, Henri Matisse, Pablo Picasso and Jackson Pollock to name a few.

Much of Wynn's collection has found a home at his properties, including a portrait of Greta Garbo by Warhol currently hanging in the Wynn Las Vegas Tower Suites lobby and the Picasso piece "Le Rêve," which formerly hung in the registration area.

Encore, which opened last month, houses numerous antique, vintage and custom pieces, including a sculpted interpretation of the goddess Daphne inside the Lobby Bar and Café. A Fernando Botero sculpture of a voluptuous woman inhabits the center



Photo by Philip Scholz-Ritterman  
The Bellagio Gallery of Fine Art will present "Classic Contemporary: Lichtenstein, Warhol & Friends," starting Jan. 23. Above, Andy Warhol, Flowers, 1967, 115 1/2" x 115 1/2", "Silkscreen on Synthetic Polymer Paint on Canvas, Copyright The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts / ARS, New York.

designers in one development," said Jim Murren, chairman and CEO of MGM Mirage. "It will be a landmark of global taste and style."

## SHOPPING WITH A SIDE OF CULTURAL ENLIGHTENMENT

It's time to go shopping at the Fashion Show Mall on the Las Vegas Strip, and there's all sorts of name brands to choose from:

Coach. Bebe. BCBG. Dali. Wait, what? Dali?

At Centaur Art Galleries in the

an eye toward contemporary art.

"We're really trying to bring to Las Vegas a little bit of a glimpse of what's happening nationally and internationally in the contemporary art arena," said Kellogg. "Contemporary art right now is the hottest thing is art. We're trying to give Las Vegas a good healthy dose of that."

In many ways, Kellogg said, the museum's interest in growing with the contemporary art movement is a reflection on Las Vegas as a destination.

*"If you are an art person and you really love art you're going to find it. It might take a little extra effort to get there but it's worth the effort."*

— Anne Kellogg, Las Vegas Art Museum

of showing only the best."

Admittance to the gallery is \$15 for adults, \$12 for Nevada residents and seniors 65 and older and \$10 for students, teachers and military with valid ID. Children 12 and younger are free.

For details, call (877) 957-9777.

## STRIP-PDA (PUBLIC DISPLAYS OF ART ON THE STRIP)

The Las Vegas Art Commission and other arts organizations in greater Las Vegas are devoted to the proliferation of art throughout the public landscape and community at large.

But many tourists are surprised to find that the Las Vegas Strip has its own artsy edge.

of the Botero Steak restaurant, while two others have found new homes on Wynn's newest property.

Guests checking into THEhotel at Mandalay Bay may be impressed to find a lobby complete with a 30-foot Arturo Herrera mural, as well as artwork by Jasper Johns and Andy Warhol.

When it opens in late 2009, CityCenter expects to be somewhat of a cultural centerpiece for Las Vegas, offering a \$40 million public fine art program with works in many styles and media by acclaimed artists throughout its public spaces.

"CityCenter will be an international architectural achievement that integrates the talents of world-renowned artists, architects and

mall, there is a large selection of fine art works by renowned artists both for sale and for general enjoyment.

The current exhibition "Fab Five" features works from Pablo Picasso, Marc Chagall, Alexander Calder, Joan Miró and Salvador Dali, five of the great masters of 20th century modern art. "Fab Five" will be on display at the gallery, 3200 S. Las Vegas Blvd. Suite 1040, through March 1.

For details, call (702) 737-1234.

## JEWEL BOX IN THE DESERT

Although it is a bit off the beaten path for tourists, art lovers would be remiss to miss LVAM.

"If you're a rock climber and you really love rock climbing, then you're going to figure out how to get to Red Rock Canyon and get all the gear you need to do that," explained Kellogg. "If you are an art person and you really love art you're going to find it. It might take a little extra effort to get there but it's worth the effort."

"L.A. Now," the current exhibition in the main gallery at LVAM features 20 Los Angeles artists, selected by curator David Pagel, an art critic for the Los Angeles Times.

In other words, Los Angeles art patrons may want to travel to Las Vegas to view some of Southern California's best emerging artists.

The art museum also features emerging and established contemporary artists from Las Vegas in its "702 series" in the smaller gallery.

With more than a 50-year history in Las Vegas, The nonprofit museum changed its focus to contemporary art and design a few years ago under the helm of its former executive director, Libby Lumpkin.

In addition to exhibitions, the institution offers education and docent programs and is currently building a permanent collection, with

"We're a young city and contemporary art is essentially a young genre of art. There's a lot of artists out there who are making fine art in that movement, so we have opportunities to grow the collection along with the artist careers," she said. "Las Vegas is such a contemporary city, why not reflect that? It makes complete sense to me, from the art collecting perspective."

Kellogg described LVAM as a jewel box of art in the desert.

"Las Vegas is becoming — no, we are — an internationally fabulous destination. There are not a lot of other cities on the planet that that can rival us in terms of anything," she said. "We want to build LVAM into an art destination within the community that is internationally fabulous to sort of go along with what our city has become."

LVAM, 9600 West Sahara Ave., is open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday and 1 to 5 p.m. Sunday. Admission is \$6 for adults, \$5 for seniors and \$3 for students. Children 12 and younger are free with an adult.

For details, call (702) 360-8000.

## FORGET ALL YOUR CARES AND GO DOWNTOWN

On select Friday nights in downtown Las Vegas, art appreciation is a party.

The downtown arts district hosts First Friday, a festival covering more than 20 city blocks once a month from 6 to 10 p.m. Five blocks are closed to traffic and arts tour trolleys make rounds at shops and galleries on Charleston, Main Street, Commerce Street and more.

About 80 indoor arts, food, drink and shop venues open their doors and 50 outdoor artists, artisans and entertainers.

For details, call (702) 384-0092.



Photos courtesy Las Vegas Art Museum

The Las Vegas Art Museum is not located on the Strip, but art lovers will find it well worth the short drive. Above, Tilted Hex Plane by Almond Zigmund (2007). Below, Rock Drug Hollywood by Sush Machida Gaikatsu (2003). Both pieces are from past exhibits.

