

UNCONVENTIONAL GALLERIES

BY CLAUDIA ALARCÓN



CANOPY BY HILTON SAN ANTONIO RIVERWALK HOTEL, PHOTO BY MAYELA GARCIA



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CANOPY BY HILTON SAN ANTONIO RIVERWALK HOTEL, PHOTO BY JASON DEWEY

SAN ANTONIO'S VISUAL ART SCENE IS STRONG AND DIVERSE, AND THIS REFLECTS NOT JUST THROUGH ITS VIBRANT PUBLIC ART AND DOZENS OF GALLERIES DOTTING THE CITY — LOCAL HOTELS AND RESTAURANTS HAVE ALSO EMBRACED THE SCENE AND PROMOTE THE ARTS IN MANY POSITIVE WAYS.

In 1977, Cappy's Restaurant opened in an old warehouse in the heart of Alamo Heights. With expanses of rustic brick walls, the idea to create an art gallery within the restaurant was born. "I admire artists. My mother was an artist and taught my siblings and I to appreciate art and design," said Cappy Lawton, proprietor of the Lawton Family of Restaurants, which, in addition to Cappy's, includes La Fonda on Main, Cappycino's and Mama's Café.

He initially began featuring aspiring artists in rotating exhibits every six weeks — "to help support the artists' careers" — with the help of his sister, whom he credits as a talented artist herself, acting as curator. Over time, another sister took over the role as curator and each show is now juried by a small panel with certain criteria to consider.



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During selection, scale is important and the restaurant can accommodate large pieces, about 20 at a time. Selections are made without ever conflicting with other galleries.

Lawton estimates that over 600 artists have been featured in the past 45 years. “There’s hardly a well-known artist we haven’t featured,” said Lawton. And with more than 500 dining guests per day, that’s a lot of viewers.

“I’ll see an artist’s work at someone’s house and reach out to them if they are not being represented by a gallery,” explained Lawton. But as his reputation grew over the years, so have the inquiries for showings, which still run on a six-to-eight-week rotation. The exhibits are always varied from show to show, with all work available for sale. But the 45-year-long endeavor is two-fold with the artists’ works be-

ing at the forefront along with gracing the walls of Cappy’s. “It changes the environment,” he said.

Chris Hill, Crockett Urban Development, Owner of Canopy by Hilton San Antonio Riverwalk Hotel, The Esquire Tavern and Hugman’s Oasis, became interested in local contemporary art when Bernard Lifshutz, Lewis Tarver and Adair Sutherland started the iconic Blue Star Contemporary Art Space. He became a passionate collector of local artists’ work and an equally avid supporter of the San Antonio art scene. “San Antonio has a vibrant local art scene. Artpace has done a great job of showing off SA artists in context with national and international artists,” said Hill.

So, when he opened Canopy, adding local art was an obvious choice. “We knew from the onset that we wanted to partner with Blue Star gallery,” said Hill. “Part of the makeup of a Canopy hotel is to be connected to its place, to be part of the community. There is a huge emphasis on locality, and what better way to express that than through art!”

Some of the larger and more important pieces were originally part of Hill’s private collection, and Mary Heathcott with Blue Star helped him to select additional work to fill in gaps where his collection lacked. “We didn’t only use work that I already owned, but also purchased local art as well,” explained Hill. “While the Guy Hundere video piece in the gallery wasn’t purchased through Blue

Star, I first saw it there. It is a piece that Alice Carrington Foultz had curated for the Blue Star Red Dot show.”

The large collection of colored water bottles displayed in Canopy Central, on the third floor, was originally commissioned long ago from the late, much beloved artist Chuck Ramirez for a big birthday party. “While not a commission for the hotel per se, we repurposed the collection into an extraordinary art piece, which is a showstopper as soon as you enter the retreat on the third floor,” said Hill.

At the recently revamped Estancia del Norte San Antonio, Tapestry Collection by Hilton, guests can immerse themselves in San Antonio art and culture with carefully curated exhibits, performances and events that serve as an extension of the rich history of the property and the city. For starters,



ESTANCIA DEL NORTE SAN ANTONIO, TAPESTRY COLLECTION BY HILTON

upon entering the lobby you won’t see the usual mass-produced, cookie-cutter art often found in hotels. Instead, you’ll find original art created by groundbreaking, innovative artists whose work is a celebration of the heritage of San Antonio. Every installation is an integral part of the hotel’s design and an intentional piece of the brand’s story.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the impressive 21-by-6-foot tile mural created by Sienna Dunis-Ginn. Located just outside LAZO by Don Strange restaurant, it showcases San Antonio’s rich history, celebrations, unique cultures and a glimpse of Estancia’s role within the city. “We’ve used the arts to add a storytelling element that sets our hotel apart,” explained Charles Leddy, CEO of Presidiana Hotels and Resorts, the parent company of Estancia del Norte.

The hotel is dedicated to growing its ever-expanding permanent art collection featuring such well-known talent as Kathy Sosa, Anely Diego, Adria Garza and Maricela Sanchez. Leddy and team also worked closely with Ana Montoya, owner of AnArte Gallery, to create an onsite art gallery where they feature bi-monthly pop-ups curated by Montoya to showcase new pieces. Documenting contemporary culture through painting, sculpture, photography and collage, the exhibits will feature the works of Alex Brochon, Ana Hernandez, Juliana Huff, Kathy Sosa, Lucy Peveto, Allison Gregory and Lilianna Story.

A native San Antonian, Leddy has a deep appreciation for the arts, community, history and vibrancy of his hometown, which drives his commitment to making the arts accessible to all, and sustainable for years to come, through the Estancia Cares Arts Program.

Art aficionado Lainey Berkus leads monthly complimentary and scheduled art tours throughout the property, educating and guiding participants as they explore all the intricate details from artistry to architecture.

The hotel works closely with the City of San Antonio



ESTANCIA DEL NORTE SAN ANTONIO, TAPESTRY COLLECTION BY HILTON, PHOTO BY EMILY ZINN



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Department of Arts and Culture and The Ambassador Theatre Group in SA, along with CAUSA, UTSA Libraries and Centro San Antonio to stay abreast of all the new and existing art opportunities. And through an Arts Concierge program, guests have access to brochures with all the current local art happenings across San Antonio from museum exhibits to local theatre productions, concerts and more.

At Estancia del Norte, the art experience extends beyond the gallery and hotel walls into interactive productions. Local performing arts companies and musicians are featured throughout the year in the Paseo bar, the LAZO restaurant and in the lush courtyard. For instance, The Children’s Ballet of San Antonio will perform in early October as a kick-off to their fall production of “The Children’s Nutcracker” and their partnership with the Estancia Cares Arts Program. And Regalo, the Estancia del Norte boutique, is a mini gallery where you can fill your suitcase with accessible and affordable pieces of art to enhance your home collection and take home a piece of true San Antonio. ♦