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A look at "Marie," by Jonathan Saiz. / Linnea Covington

Le Méridien and AC Marriott Unpack Impressive Art Collections

LINNEA COVINGTON | OCTOBER 17, 2017 | 6:54AM

As you walk into the new **Le Méridien hotel in downtown Denver**, you are greeted by a giant piece of art behind the reception desk. At first glance, it seems to be an inverted mountain of sunset colors, but a closer look reveals approximately 1,100 tiny, textured oil paintings of a woman with a cloud of white hair, rosy cheeks and a can't-touch-me attitude. She is Marie Antoinette, France's last queen and an icon in both European history and pop culture.

The piece is "Marie," and artist Jonathan Saiz created it to pay homage to social media, France's elegance and the famous woman herself. It also tips a hat to the hotel group's French roots, which date back to the 1970s.



Artist Jonathan Saiz in front of "Marie." / **Linnea Covington**

"The work is about the humanity, the effect of celebrity and the juxtaposition of public and private personal lives," says Saiz of the "bon bon" paintings enclosed in little jewel boxes. "Whatever you bring to the viewing is what you bring." Some of the paintings took just a few minutes, while Saiz spent almost an hour on others.

"Marie" is unique, but it's hardly Le Méridien's only piece of art. The hotel boasts more than 1,700 works, all curated by the art-consulting company **NINE dot ARTS**. Over twenty artists are represented; many are from Colorado.



Ramon Bonilla's "Netherworld; The Front Range." / **Linnea Covington**

"We were looking for things that were very feminine and romantic," says Deanne Gertner, senior arts administrator for NINE dot ARTS.

Also in the lobby is local artist Regan Rosburg's stunning resin-and-found-object collage, "Vanitas V." It looks like a frilly piece of art until you get close and see the dried spider and lizard, squirrel skull and delicate rounds of a wasp's nest layered with paintings of feathers and flowers that have a three-dimensional quality. "It's lovely and gorgeous and feels like it's decaying at the same time," says Gertner. "It draws you in and you discover things."



"Arinae," by Mia Mulvey. / **Linnea Covington**

Blue clouds by Laura Guese cover a secret corner; the painting took the artist two and a half weeks of twelve-hour days to complete. Mia Mulvey's "Arinae" hangs in the hotel restaurant, **Corinne**; the Colorado artist layered carbonized fruit and bird sculptures on top of a stunning black-and-white silhouette. Another lobby piece, "Convergence 3," by local painter Ashley Eliza Williams, features an ominous swarm of birds in a beautiful cloudy sky; it has a simplicity and gentle beauty that help showcase what Gertner calls the hotel's edgy "lady-like" decor.



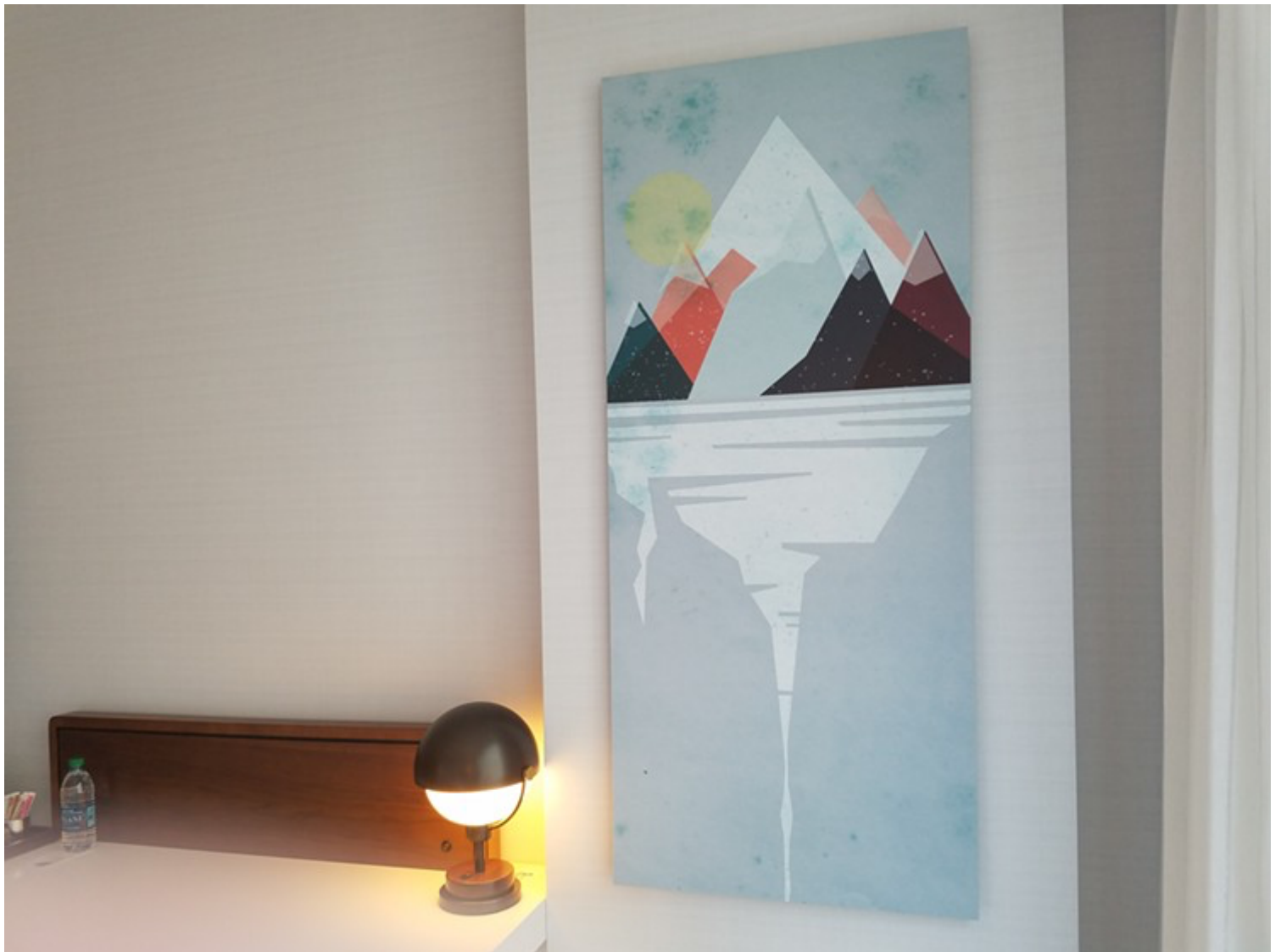
Michael Dowling's bull in the lobby of the AC Marriott. / **Linnea Covington**

Attached to Le Méridien is the AC Marriott, which projects a more "manly" vibe; NINE dot ARTS curated this art collection, too. The hotels share a building and common areas, but have distinct styles in the hallways, rooms and lobbies. For example, over the AC Marriott's reception desk is Kelton Osborne's ode to the guitar (or something else, perhaps), as well as a projection of Republic Plaza by local video artist Jennifer Miller, who teaches at Rocky Mountain College of Art + Design. In this lobby, you can sit between striking images of a matador and a pair of bulls by Michael Dowling. The local artist created these two works at the last minute at the request of the curators, and they work so well in the space, it's as if the pieces had been planned all along.



Laura Guese's clouds. / **Linnea Covington**

Each floor of both Le Méridien and the AC Marriott are adorned with art. On the twentieth floor, which holds the rooftop bar, 54thirty, Ramon Bonilla's "Netherworld; The Front Range" offers guests a whimsical mountainscape. Prints by snowboard artists Kelsey Anderson and Samantha Madden adorn the rooms. One of Madden's designs features magnificent peaks against a powder-blue background with happy colors accenting certain parts. The bright hues mimic the pop of color found in the rooms, which otherwise have a subdued color scheme of grays and white.



Snowboard art by Samantha Madden. / **Linnea Covington**

The entire collection will soon have museum-like note cards with descriptions for each piece. For now, you're on your own figuring out who did what; you can take a quick tour simply by stopping the elevator on each floor. And by the holidays, guests should be able to take guided tours of both hotels' impressive collections.



"Dust Bunnies" by Nathan Abels. / **Linnea Covington**

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