

FINDING HOPE

Charlie Whitmer's life was much different a year ago. His wife died just after giving birth, and now he's a single father of triplet babies. *In Life*



MATTHEW HARTZ/CTMG

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Saint Kate has a theater troupe, gallery and leopard spots

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SAINT KATE PHOTOS

Milwaukee's Saint Kate hotel has 219 guest rooms. The art-focused property takes the place of the former InterContinental.

Milwaukee's new arts hotel

Saint Kate has a theater troupe, a museum gallery — and a guest room covered in leopard spots

By LORI RACKL
Chicago Tribune

MILWAUKEE — Leopard spots — thousands of them, in a multitude of colors and sizes — cover just about every nook and cranny of one of the 219 guest rooms in Milwaukee's new Saint Kate hotel that opened in early June.

"You have to sign a waiver that if you stay in this room and nine months later you have a child covered in leopard spots, we're not responsible," joked Lon Michels, the Wisconsin artist behind the room's unorthodox, Instagram-darling design.

The Leopard Room's anything-goes aesthetic is just one sign that this hotel is of a different stripe. Occupying a downtown building that used to be the InterContinental, Saint Kate takes the con-



SAINT KATE

Wisconsin artist Lon Michels was invited to decorate one of the 219 guest rooms at Milwaukee's new Saint Kate hotel. Michels chose to cover just about every surface with colorful leopard spots.

horse sculptures that anchors the spacious lobby.

"I wanted it to be art that we found, art that spoke to us," Greg Marcus said, "not art made for the hotel."

Marcus' team visited dozens of art-focused hotels over the past four years, trying to fine-tune its vision for Saint Kate, named for the patron saint of artists, St. Catherine of Bologna.

"We thought, 'What if we included the performing arts?'" Marcus said. "It made perfect sense; we're sitting among a lot of the city's performing arts venues — The Rep (Milwaukee Repertory Theater), Pabst, Marcus Center."

In addition to the Arc Theatre, the hotel houses an outpost of the Museum of Wisconsin Art, or MOWA, a 1,700-square-foot

ship between a hotel and a museum."

In the culinary arts arena, the hotel lays claim to having the city's sole Champagne bar, a pizza joint whose oven imported from Italy can cook a pie in 90 seconds, and a 26-seat, speakeasy-style steakhouse (slated to open this week), among other spots to wine and dine.

Local artists and makers helped influence the look of the guest rooms, starting at about \$299 a night, on average. Their work can be seen in everything from the bed scarves and lamp shades to the bathrooms' shower tile, custom-designed Kohler sinks and handmade bars of soap shaped like erasers.

Five of the rooms, including the colorful Leopard Room, are one-of-a-kind dwellings, each

troupe, an ensemble cast of actors, dancers, musicians, jugglers and more. They put on plays and other shows at the hotel's 90-seat Arc Theatre, but these artists-in-residence also do pop-up performances around the property. Local filmmakers, comedians and the like will occasionally take the stage for ticketed events at the black box theater as well. In the bar or lobby, patrons might encounter a band rehearsal or interpretive dance or stumble upon a different artistic surprise.

"The idea is kind of like a fine-arts Disney World," said Saint Kate's programming director,

On Tuesday evenings, Price can be found playing the bass at the Pfister, another downtown Milwaukee hotel with an extensive, but more traditional, art collection. He performs alongside pianist Greg Marcus, the president and CEO of Marcus Corp., whose portfolio includes hotels and resorts — The Pfister and Saint Kate among them — along with hundreds of movie theaters across the Midwest.

The company "has always been rooted in that intersection of business and the arts," Greg Marcus said during a recent preopening tour of the property at 139 E.

and down the 10-story building as sculptures, paintings and tapestries were being dispatched to their new homes under the watchful eye of Saint Kate curator Maureen Ragalie.

"I didn't want it to be a marketing gimmick," Marcus said about Saint Kate's art collection, much of which was sourced by his wife, fashion designer and former "Project Runway" contestant Linda Marcus.

More than 100 contemporary works make up the inventory of permanent pieces, including a print by Damien Hirst and one of Deborah Butterfield's skeletal

The first one, titled "Downtown," features works depicting Wisconsin's largest city through the lens of 10 artists. It includes a phone booth installation where people can listen to more than a dozen poems by Milwaukee poets, and the photographs of a Sudan-born immigrant getting his first museum show.

"We wanted to connect with new and emerging artists," said Laurie Winters, executive director of MOWA in West Bend, Wis. "We like the idea of having a museum in the middle of Milwaukee's art and cultural district. It's an unprecedented partner-

revenue getting donated to arts-related nonprofit organizations.

All guest rooms come equipped with a record player and ukulele, as well as a roll of butcher paper and colored pencils, just in case the surroundings inspire guests. And the hope is they will.

"Anyone can see finished art; we want people to experience the process," said Erin Levzow, vice president of marketing for Marcus Hotels & Resorts. "The room needs to be restful but also be a place where you can create."

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Exhibit numbers grow at Sculpture Milwaukee

STORY AND PHOTOS
BY LORI RACKL
Chicago Tribune

MILWAUKEE — One of the busiest streets in Wisconsin's largest city turned into an outdoor art gallery when Sculpture Milwaukee debuted earlier this month.

Works by local, national and international artists flank Wisconsin Avenue for a nearly mile-long expanse that stretches as far east as the Milwaukee Art Museum campus. More than 20 sculptures — the largest collection to date — make up this season's show, which is running through Oct. 27.

This marks the third year in a row for the public art program founded by a well-known name in Milwaukee: Steve Marcus, chairman of the board of Marcus Corp., whose lodging division recently opened the city's arts-focused Saint Kate hotel.

Marcus' son Greg, president and CEO of the company, said his father has always been keenly aware of the power of art, and his dad wanted to harness that power to lure more pedestrian traffic downtown.

"He thought it would be a way to get people to walk up and down Wisconsin Avenue — and it has," Greg Marcus said.

The sculptures, many of which are on loan from galleries, are for sale. A portion of the proceeds would help pay for future installments of Sculpture Milwaukee.

Some past pieces have been bought and donated to the city or other institutions, becoming permanent fixtures around town.

One of last year's highlights, a Robert Indiana "Love" sculpture, was purchased by an anonymous donor. The iconic piece of pop art will be stationed outside the Milwaukee Art Museum later this year.

This year's Sculpture Milwaukee includes the first building installation. At the corner of Water Street and Wisconsin Avenue, Chase Bank's two-story atrium windows are covered with colorful flowers for "Gild the Lily (Caribbean Hybrid I, II, III)," a commissioned piece by Carlos Rolón, a Chicago-based artist of Puerto Rican descent.

Another eye-catching work, "Hera (half)," comes from Chicago-born sculptor Tony Matelli, known for peppering his classical statuary with decomposing food — in this case, watermelon — that looks remarkably real. Works by Max Ernst and Elmgreen & Dragset are on display, as well as sculptures of a penguin and rabbits.

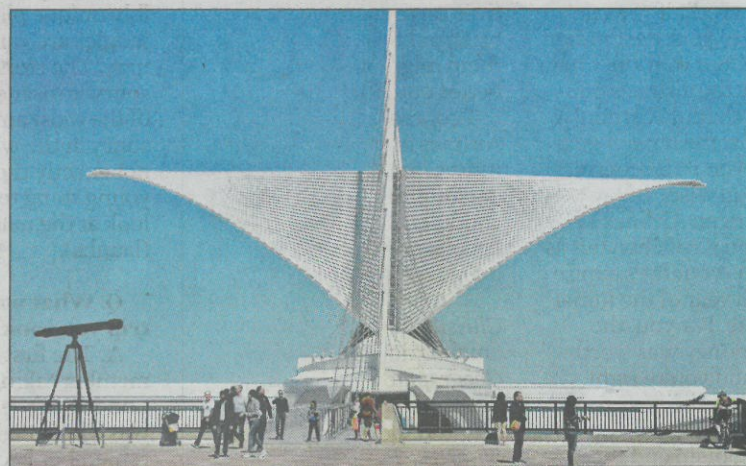
"I feel like this year is the year of the animal," said Marilu Knodel, Sculpture Milwaukee's director of exhibitions and programs.

Go to sculpturemilwaukee.com for more information, including a map of all the art and tour details.

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"Hot Dog Vendor" is one of two pieces by Red Grooms as part of Sculpture Milwaukee.



Positioned outside the Milwaukee Art Museum, one of the works in this year's Sculpture Milwaukee — Elmgreen & Dragset's giant telescope sculpture, "A Greater Perspective" — points toward Lake Michigan.



Chicago-based artist Carlos Rolón's building installation covers Chase Bank's atrium.