

Hotel Masterpieces

| By Michele Andrus Dill

Three exceptional Puget Sound-area hotels with art-related themes offer service, amenities and ambiance that are impressing guests. The new **Heathman Hotel**—in the art-gallery-rich “urban village” of Kirkland, about 15 miles east of downtown Seattle—lives up to its motto, “Where service is still an art.” The new **Hotel Murano**—in the art-minded city of Tacoma, about 20 miles from Sea-Tac Airport and about 35 miles south of downtown Seattle—is, as it promises, “artful, sophisticated, warm and comforting,” and the remodeled **Alexis Hotel**—in a prime downtown Seattle location near top Emerald City attractions—is, indeed, “dedicated to the art of living.”

The Heathman Hotel

220 Kirkland Ave., Kirkland; 425-284-5800, 800-551-0011; www.heathmanhotel.com

My husband and I have dubbed the classic yet modern Heathman, which opened in October, “Our Castle in Kirkland.”

The name is partially inspired by the 91-room hotel’s impressive red-brick exterior, marked by arches and Juliet balconies, but even more inspired by staff who make us feel like royalty.

“Personal concierges” handle the reservations, valet, check-in and porter services, and do so with such warmth and finesse that the Queen of England couldn’t ask for more. A few days before we arrive, I get an e-mail from head concierge Stephen. Can he do anything for me? Make an appointment at the hotel’s organic-product-focused Penterra Spa? Tell me about

Eastside galleries, wineries, gardens, shopping, theaters and museums? Line up scooter rentals, parasailing or a lunch cruise on Lake Washington, just a block from the hotel? Send me information on public-art and nature-



ROBERT PISANO PHOTOGRAPHY

The warm, upscale Heathman—which is known for its “Personal Concierge” service—is a Built Green hotel.

appreciation walking tours? Procure a reservation at The Heathman's extremely popular Trellis restaurant, whose esteemed chef, Brian Scheehser, not only purchases local organic produce but also grows it?

Also, what is my choice from their Art of Sleep Bed Menu: feather, Tempur-Pedic or European pillowtop? And, do I have any special requests?

Guest Services Manager Chris Wehmer later tells me that, at guests' requests, the staff has changed all of the Cokes to Pepsis in a mini bar; shopped Nordstrom at upscale Bellevue Square Mall, just 10 minutes away, for a business traveler who needed a suit for a meeting; and brought in a special dog bed for a female traveler bringing her pet. Rooms on the first floor of the hotel are pet-friendly, while the rest are pet-free, an arrangement that works great both for pet owners and for pet-allergic people like me.

When Michael and I walk into the lobby—with its teak-wrapped pillars, travertine floor, and a pianist playing jazz music as guests relax in plush



Above: Tacoma's modern and stylish Hotel Murano—named for the famous Venetian glass-blowing island—even has handblown-glass bedside lamps. Below: The inviting lobby at the renovated Alexis Hotel in downtown Seattle.

tan-and-green-striped chairs by the gas fireplace—we're immediately greeted by personal concierge Lia. In keeping with the hotel's philosophy of no barriers between you and your room, she isn't standing behind a desk, and she speedily shows us to the 1,164-square-foot Owner's Suite, where we're staying because we're celebrating our anniversary.

Lia points out the lovely views of Lake Washington from west- and south-facing windows; demonstrates how to turn on the two-sided gas fireplace—complementing the warm gold, bronze, honey and orange tones of the sleeping and sitting areas; notes the suite's HDTV flat screens; indicates the wet bar; and demonstrates the French press for the complimentary, organic, fair-trade Caffé Vita coffee and the Mighty Leaf teas. She also explains that high-speed wireless Internet and even domestic long-distance and local calls are complimentary for all hotel guests.

In the sleeping area, she gestures toward the plush robes laid out invitingly on the bed, with companion slippers on the floor, and tells us that the marble bathroom's jetted soaking tub is a Sanijet that keeps out residual water from prior use. She also makes sure we see the recycling bin.

"We're a certified Built Green hotel," she stresses.



DAVID PHELPS (2)

“Being green is really important to us. Our energy is recycled, and we use all-natural cleaning products from a Washington state company. The room thermostat even senses when you’re not here and adjusts the temperature.”

It’s a feature found in all of the hotel’s spacious rooms, along with robes, slippers, French presses, flat-screen TVs, MP3-compatible clock/radios, and water, mountain or city views. Most of the rooms also have soaking tubs, and five suites have double-sided fireplaces.

After Lia leaves, we notice that there’s a fresh orchid and a gift on the work desk, where an

ergonomic chair is situated for prime views of the lake. The gift is a box of hand-tied blooming teas, with a note written by Stephen and signed by all the concierges that says: “Happy Anniversary, Mr. and Mrs. Dill. The 28th year we hope blossoms even more! Enjoy the year of the orchid!”

“They really make guests feel special here,” I comment to Michael.

When we go down to Trellis—where shelves of regional and international wines take up the entire back wall—Chef Scheehser’s farm-fresh, wine-country-style dishes remind us of our stay in Tuscany a few years ago. He successfully combines “rustic robust” with “upscale modern” to delight diners with everything from lamb-sirloin carpaccio and local Penn Cove mussels to dairy-free squash soup and the wine-country platter of handcrafted sliced meats and farmstead cheeses. The menu follows the seasons, but if the orange flatbread is offered, be

sure to try this novel and delicious combination of arugula and prosciutto over thinly sliced oranges on flatbread.

For our entrees, Michael savors lamb cassoulet with grilled French sausage and flageolet beans, while I enjoy the “hanging tender” steak with roasted carrots and parsnips from the chef’s garden. We have a view of the

restaurant’s outdoor seating area, where warm-weather sunshine furthers the sense of being in wine country.

The hotel’s 5,000-square-foot Penterra Spa also emphasizes a connection to the earth. “Pente” is Greek for “five,” and “terra” is Greek for “earth.” Therapies focus on five areas: energy, aromatherapy, ritual, touch and healing. My Aloe and Green Tea Wrap treatment provides skin repair and hydration, and is a great option for people with dry skin or eczema. Therapist Andrea dry-brushes my skin to exfoliate it; gently rubs in the silky-light aloe and green-tea infusions; then deftly wraps my arms and legs in organic linens, and massages my scalp. Uspa, the Australian manufacturer of the infusions, prescribes a certain ritual to make the process soothing, and I become so mellowed out, I fall asleep.

Afterward, in the Sanctuary relaxation room,

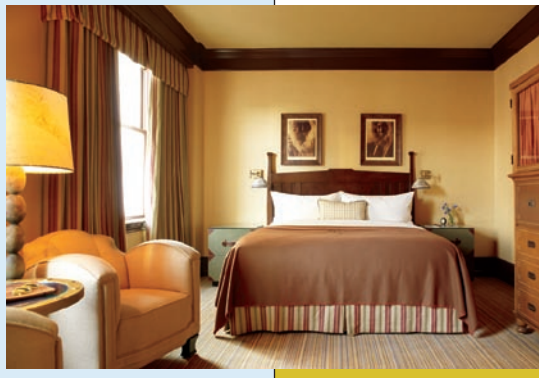
New and Newsworthy

The **Arctic Club Hotel** luxury property is scheduled to open this month in downtown Seattle. Named for a Seattle men’s club established in 1908 by Klondike Gold Rush adventurers, the 120-room hotel is located in the Arctic Building that the club completed in 1917 and which is now on the National Register of Historic Places. The building’s exterior features 27 molded walrus heads; its foyer and stairwells are lined with Alaska marble; and original frescoes and a stained-glass dome adorn the Northern Lights Dome Room meeting space. Guests can use the Fitness Center and receive a discount to a nearby health club. Room amenities range from terraces to jetted tubs, with free HBO in all rooms. The Juno restaurant will focus on organic and eco-friendly fare, and the Polar Bar will also serve high tea. 206-340-0340; www.arcticclubhotel.com.

Four Seasons Hotel and Private Residences is expected to open this fall in a newly constructed \$120 million-plus, 147-hotel-room/36-condo building that overlooks Elliott Bay and is across from the Seattle Art Museum. In addition to famous Four Seasons service, the boutique hotel’s attractions include a 6,000-square-foot spa, an outdoor pool and hot tub, and a water-view restaurant. Bill Gates participated in an investor group that bought and took private the Four Seasons hotel-management company last year. The hotel property is owned by The Seattle Hotel Group, which includes former Seattle mayor Paul Schell. 206-749-7000; www.fourseasons.com.

The **1 Hotel & Residences** eco-friendly luxury complex, opening in early 2010 near Pike Place Market, will include a 40,000-square-foot athletic club and spa, an upscale grocery store, the Ocean restaurant, and a lobby with a brooklike water feature. The \$250 million property, which is expected to be LEED-certified, will have 132 traditional hotel rooms, 44 privately owned “city suites” and 51 condos, including seven penthouses. 206-256-1600; www.1residences.com.

A **Sheraton Seattle** expansion, completed in October, added a 25-story, \$130 million Union Street Tower downtown, with 420 guestrooms, 22 new meeting rooms, The Daily Grill restaurant and an 18,300-square-foot ballroom. The expansion makes the Sheraton one of the Northwest’s largest convention-and-event properties. The new tower complements



The Arctic Club Hotel.

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I sip a loose-leaf “detox” herbal-tea blend while chatting with a male Microsoft employee who visits the spa every month.

The spa also has steamrooms that hotel guests can use, while the adjacent fitness center has a good array of equipment popular with businesspeople attending meetings in the hotel’s 2,509 square feet of conference/banquet space, and with guests like us who are here for some R&R.

A comment card in our room wants to know if the hotel has met our expectations: Was our overall experience at The Heathman “Dazzling,” “Average” or “Fizzling”?

“Dazzling,” Michael and I say to each other as I fill in that circle. “Definitely dazzling.”

The Heathman is a sister hotel to the renowned Portland Heathman. Heathman Kirkland rates start at \$249.

Hotel Murano

1320 Broadway Plaza, Tacoma;
253-238-8000, 888-862-3255; www.hotelmuranotacoma.com

As Michael and I ride the elevator up to our room, it stops at the 15th floor, and two 40-something women enter. “We’re taking a tour of the art on every floor,” they volunteer. “It is all so impressive!”

The 26-floor Hotel Murano—named for the famous Venetian glassblowing island—is the first hotel in the world to focus extensively on glass art. Museum-quality pieces, commissioned from 47 top artists across the globe, are displayed at every turn. The 15th floor features an amazing sewn-glass corset by American artist Susan Taylor Glasgow, and a picture of her intricate, fused-glass piece enlivens our room keys.

In the lobby, American artist Brent

Kee Young’s glass oars hang above a gas fireplace in an open lounge; Dale Chihuly seaforms adorn alcoves; and a stunning silvery, octopuslike chandelier by Venice’s Massimo Micheluzzi lights long, low, gray and aqua couches. Danish artist Vibeke Skov’s three multicolored glass Viking longboats hang in a hallway by some of the hotel’s 28,000 square feet of meeting space (where members of one conference group proudly carry ceramic mugs brought from home, a paper-saving practice the hotel allows as part of green measures that include recycling bins and energy-efficient heating/cooling systems). The hotel’s exterior entrance is marked by a 104-foot-tall dipperlike sculpture by internationally

renowned Greek artist Costas Varotsos.

And spectacular art is only part of the appeal at the sophisticated, modern, 320-room hotel, which officially opened in March after Provenance Hotels’ \$20 million-plus renovation of a previous hotel. For instance, located off the lobby is the 5,000-square-foot Savi Day Spa, and the adjacent dry sauna and Jacuzzi, which are open to hotel guests and spa clients.

Michael and I enjoy a couple’s massage in the Waterfall Room, where my therapist, Jason, uses lomilomi techniques to provide one of the best massages I’ve ever had. Afterward, aesthetician Catalina dry-brushes my skin and applies sea-based ingredients from Phytomer as part of the Luminous Moisture Cocoon treatment, which includes a foot massage. Afterward, when I go to the Sanctuary for some tea, the spa staff brings me a warmed, lavender-scented neck roll. Guests who want to work out as well as “spa” will appreciate the hotel’s well-equipped fitness room.

Bite restaurant, overlooking the skylighted lobby, is another excellent reason to stay at Hotel Murano. Thanks to dishes such as crab ravioli and iron-seared New York strip steak, the restaurant is rapidly becoming a gathering spot for locals and visitors. Its popularity is also due to the hotel’s outstanding location next to the Greater Tacoma Convention & Trade Center and just a short stroll—or free light-rail ride—to museums, theaters and the Tacoma Dome, making the hotel the perfect place to stay whether you’re traveling for business or leisure.

Hotel Murano also has numerous unique packages—from “Spa La La” to “You’re So Very Special”—that delight all types of travelers. A “Nice” package includes amenities such as milk and cookies, breakfast in bed, champagne, late checkout and a “Nice Box” with romance items such as body paint. The “Naughty” package includes cocktails. “Artsy Fartsy” features tickets for two to the Museum of Glass, Tacoma Art Museum and Washington State History Museum, all of which have notable exhibits.

Michael and I are thrilled by our weekend “Hot Piece of Glass” package,

the existing 838-guestroom Pike Street Tower.
206-621-9000; www.starwoodhotels.com.

Silver Cloud Hotel—Stadium opened in January 2007 across from the Safeco Field ballpark, and near the Qwest Field football stadium, in the city’s historic Pioneer Square district. Amenities at the 211-room hotel include a top-floor outdoor pool with a hot tub and sun deck; a fitness center; guestroom wetbars, refrigerators and microwaves; complimentary guest-laundry facilities; and Jimmy’s, an upscale yet casual restaurant/bar. 206-204-9800; www.silvercloud.com.

The historic **Sorrento**, one of Seattle’s most renowned luxury hotels, which has attracted numerous celebrities over the decades, is marking its 100th anniversary this year. The 76-room hotel’s first registered guest was President William Taft. The hotel’s architecture and ambiance reflect the Italian town for which it is named. The hotel is also famous for the Fireside Room, where locals and visitors relax before and after dinner, symphony and theater engagements, and for the first-rate Hunt Club restaurant, which is featuring a different decade each month from its past menus. The 1940–1950 emphasis for May includes green-bean salad for lunch, veal for dinner, an Almond Joy dessert special and an orange-mint julep. 206-622-6400; www.hotelsorrento.com.

This August, the four-star **Tulalip Resort Casino & Spa** in the Marysville area, about 45 miles north of Seattle, will add 370 guestrooms, a 14,000-square-foot spa, an indoor pool, the Blackfish bistro and the Mpulse Lounge to the resort’s existing attractions of a nightclub, showroom, casino, amphitheater, meeting space and fine-dining Tulalip Bay restaurant. 360-651-1111; www.tulalipcasino.com. —M.A.D.

which includes tickets to the Museum of Glass and a glassblowing lesson at the Tacoma Glassblowing Studio. The studio is one of the few places in the world where you can try your hand at glassblowing for just a few hours—perfect for visitors who can't make the multilesson commitment studios typically require.

Mark Sigafos—who was part of the Dale Chihuly team that created the blown-glass ceiling art for the Bellagio hotel in Las Vegas—co-owns the studio with his wife, Jeannine. Mark helps Michael create an egg-shaped blue/orange/white-swirled paperweight and walks me through blowing a cobalt fluted bowl.

"This is great. This is fun. This is *really* fun," Michael says as we learn the meaning of terms such as "gathering"—dipping the pipe inside a 2,100-degree furnace to collect molten glass.

When we return to the studio the next day to pick up our pieces after they've cooled (the studio can also ship your pieces to your home), I see that Michael's paperweight looks almost professional, while my bowl has many visible bubbles—the result of my imperfect blowing technique. "That's OK—those bubbles are visible encapsulations of my breath," I explain to Michael. "As long as this piece is on the earth, part of me is here, too."

Back at the hotel, we carefully place our artwork on the dining table in our corner suite, which has a view of Puget Sound to the north and the Thea Foss Waterway to the east. We make Tazo tea (Torrefazione coffee is also complimentary) before settling onto the snazzy tomato-hued couch to watch the flat-screen TV—with occasional proud glances at our new centerpieces.

But we're not dependent on our creations for glass-art ambiance. The sleeping area has bedside lamps hand-blown by a Portland studio, and the marbled bathroom has a glass vanity with a vessel sink. Silver-hued curtains (with a circular pattern that now reminds me of glassblowing bubbles), blue-gray carpet and a white, tufted-faux-leather headboard above the pillowtop mattress create a hip yet restful atmosphere. So do the soft white robes, Pillow Menu, Spiritual Menu

(with choices ranging from Tao Te Ching to the Book of Mormon), and clock/radio iPod docking station (you can borrow a preprogrammed iPod if you didn't bring your own).

If we need to get to work, there's a desk, high-speed wireless Internet access, and a cordless phone. A "Help Me" button on the phone console provides one-touch response to our every need.

While views vary by room, non-suite and pet-friendly guestrooms also have all of the above amenities except the couch, and they have aqua-blue settees next to the windows. Fellow guests tell us the settee is a great place to relax while eating the turndown treat, Almond Roca, which we discover is made by Tacoma-based Brown & Haley.

"So," Michael says, when our TV movie is over. "Do you want to go to the history museum, Mad Hat Tea Company, musical-instrument store or cupcake shop?"

"You know," I reply, "this hotel is a great attraction in and of itself—it's an international art gallery. I want to visit it some more. Let's go out and ride the elevator—and stop at every floor."

Rates start at \$159.

Alexis Hotel

1007 First Avenue, Seattle; 206-624-4844, 888-850-1155; www.alexishotel.com

When famous authors such as Maya Angelou, David Mitchell and Joan Anderson come to Seattle, they often stay at the Alexis Hotel, where they can enjoy not only the wood-burning fireplace and jetted tub in the Author's Suite, but also one of the Emerald City's best-kept hotel secrets: the private steamroom.

For those in the know, the steamroom is reason alone to book the hotel. A certain stressed-out businessman stays at the Alexis every month so he can wind down amid clouds of steam he has all to himself. And couples plan weekend escapes around an hour-long visit to the steam suite, which also has a shower with dual massaging showerheads. You can reserve your steam time in advance when you make your reservation.

Of course, there are lots of other great

reasons to book the historic 121-room boutique hotel, which was built in 1901 and is celebrating the October 2007 completion of a \$10 million renovation. From the Alexis it's a short stroll to prime attractions such as Pike Place Market and the Seattle Art Museum, and the hotel is just two blocks from Seattle's dynamic waterfront.

Guests enjoy HDTV flat screens, feather-down bedding, cordless telephones, a fitness center, complimentary wireless high-speed Internet access and a new business center with four work areas. In addition, the renovation included the hotel's 4,000 square feet of meeting space—updating, for instance, the Grand Parlor to expose the red bricks that frame its floor-to-ceiling windows.

The hotel's street-level floor includes Parfumerie Nasreen, with an international collection of fragrances; the Aveda-affiliated Etherea Salon and Spa, where my massage therapist, Joseph, originally from Oahu, delivers on the spa's promise that I will "feel heavenly"; the Bookstore Bar; and the Library Bistro, which supports local and organic products, and uses no trans fats in creating its dishes.

The literary names of the dining spaces complement the theme of the Author's Suite, where even regular folk can sleep surrounded by books autographed by the famous authors who previously slept here. However, the literary arts are not the only ones celebrated at the hotel. There is a Canlis Glass Suite (with photos featuring Jean-Pierre Canlis, a member of Seattle's prominent Canlis Restaurant family), a Seattle Art Museum Suite, a Seattle Asian Art Museum Suite, a Pacific Northwest Ballet Suite, a KMTT (radio) Suite, and a Seattle Symphony Suite.

Even if you're not staying in one of those suites, you can enjoy the original artworks that change quarterly throughout the hotel, and relax in the hotel's marble-floored lobby—in sophisticated yet warm tones of cream, black and chestnut—while admiring J.P. Canlis' glass *Sandbar Double Up*.

Every guestroom has interesting artwork on its walls, as well: Michael and I are in a Puget Sound-view Spa Suite with

a print of a man in a bowler hat standing atop a tower of books and looking out at the water. This intriguing piece is complemented by a red glass vase next to the Torrefazione coffee and Numi teas on the ornate scrollworked buffet.

The buffet is next to the recycling bin, in keeping with the Alexis' commitment to green practices, including use of natural, nontoxic cleaning products. We can see the results in our sparkling, dark-and-white-chocolate-colored, marbled bathroom, which is so spacious, it has a chaise and the deepest, biggest, double-person jetted soaking tub we've ever seen. Twenty rooms in the hotel have jetted tubs, although not all are extra-deep.

All the rooms have fluffy robes, which—since the Alexis is part of the Kimpton boutique-hotel group that promises “care, comfort, style, flavor and fun”—have animal patterns on them. Ours are faux leopard.

The hotel is even fun for young guests, as indicated by the s'mores in “The Art of Being a Kid” package, and for pets, which get complimentary treats.

One of the notable hotel amenities for adult guests is the complimentary evening wine reception, where Michael and I mingle with couples celebrating anniversaries and a business group from Hong Kong. Every night, the pours include Northwest wines, an international wine, organic ales, mineral water and a specialty soda. Tonight, they include a riesling from Washington's Chateau Ste. Michelle and a chardonnay from Australia.

After the reception, Michael and I enjoy outstanding clam chowder and pulled-pork bites in the Bookstore Bar. The star in the Kimpton “flavor” category, though, is the Saturday and Sunday brunch at the Library Bistro.

“Can we make this a regular event?” I ask Michael as I sip fresh-squeezed orange juice in between bites of a frittata made with farm-fresh brown eggs, and organic locally foraged crimini and shiitake mushrooms, accompanied by potatoes with house-grown chives.

“Yes!” he agrees, as he scoops locally made strawberry preserves over pan-

cakes made with plump, local, organic blueberries.

We feel so happy after our splendid brunch that Michael is inspired to be artistic himself. He picks out “purple” from the cup of crayons placed at our butcher-paper-covered table and draws a big lopsided heart with an arrow, and the words, “I love you.”

“I love you, too,” I reply. ... “And, I love the Alexis.”

Rates start at \$209. **S**

Michele Andrus Dill is the editor of Horizon Air Magazine and senior editor of Alaska Airlines Magazine.

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