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Plano hotel features local artists

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With more than 600 pieces of local art scattered throughout the building, Jay Shinn hopes the recent opening of his 108-room Homewood Suites hotel in Plano leaves guests with a lasting impression of Texas lore.

The four-story hotel -- officially named Homewood Suites by Hilton Plano-Technology Crossroads -- opened Sept. 18 along the President George Bush Turnpike near Jupiter Road.

In addition to the art, created by 15 art students at Carrollton's R.L. Turner High School during the 2002-2003 school year, the hotel also features a painting by their teacher, regional artist Ted Kincaid, and two sculptures at least 12 feet tall.

The hotel also showcases black-and-white photos of famous native Texans such as Nolan Ryan, Ann Richards and Dan Rather.

Because of its location near many high-tech businesses, the \$10 million property also is decorated with a set of technologically themed photos shot by John Pomara, head of the art department at the University of Texas at Dallas.

Shinn -- an art collector of 20 years who crafted one of the sculptures that sit in the hotel's backyard garden -- said the art has a permanent home at his hotel.

"I don't know that we'll take any of it away, but we certainly may add to it," said Shinn, CEO of Lewisville-based Magnolia Lodging, which owns the new hotel.

Of the four other Metroplex hotels owned by Magnolia, two carry the Homewood Suites name and another operates under the Hilton flag. Both brands are owned by Beverly Hills, Calif.-based Hilton Hotels Corp.

Shinn's art helps distinguish the hotel from other properties under the same name, said Dawn Ray, manager of brand communications for Homewood Suites by Hilton.

"This is a special case," she said. "Certainly we're not changing the prototype of a Homewood, but it still very much feels like a Homewood."

The need for 600 pieces of artwork in a short amount of time gave Kincaid a reason to start a fine-art printing press owned by the school, called Turner Press.

"I used it as a way to jump-start the (Turner Press) project," he said. "We were considering starting by publishing a small work by an artist. This was sort of like throwing the child in the deep end to learn to swim. So we thought this was probably the best way to start."

Kincaid, whose artwork is displayed in galleries in Dallas, Houston, New Orleans and New York, said he'd like to see more hotels showcase original art.

"I really think it's necessary," he said. "It's so much nicer. It gives a focus. It calms you, and it makes you very alert at the same time to have all that visual stimulation around you."

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