

# Art of Hospitality showcases new Fair Oaks hotel

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When planning took place for a hotel at Fair Oaks Farms, officials knew it had to be unique.

Instead of a typical hotel facade, a barn-shaped exterior was created when the new Fairfield by Marriott Fair Oaks Farms hotel was designed.

Just like the outside of the facility, officials focused on making the interior space stand out.

To accomplish that goal, Fair Oaks Farms collaborated with three artists to create pieces to fill the hotel.

Their work was the main attraction Saturday during The Art of Hospitality event at the hotel, which recently opened.

Artwork from New Mexico-based painter of fluid abstracts Michael Kessler, Chicago-based art photographer JD Dennison and Montana-based painter of saturated surrealism R. Tom Gilleon are featured in the hotel. Each of the artists on Saturday explained their careers and their process for creating pieces.

Kessler has his original artwork on the walls of the hotel's main entrance.

Kessler explained he immerses himself in beautiful parts of nature to study and abstract areas.

He said he deconstructs and reconstructs nature to come up with ideas for paintings.

Michael McCall, chief strategy officer at Fair Oaks Farms, said he met Kessler on an airplane.

"I followed his career for about 20 years," McCall said.

When the art project at the hotel started, McCall knew he wanted Kessler to be part of it.

Dennison's artwork is featured in many public spaces in the hotel and in every guest room.

He uses an inversion process with his photography as a way to pull more beauty from nature.

Dennison said when photos are inverted, they look like paintings.

He photographed different areas of the Fair Oaks Farm property during each season. Cows, deer, a corn field and trucks were among subjects in his art.

"It's been a real fun project to be a part of," Dennison said.

Gilleon's use of color and whimsy can be seen in the pool area of the hotel.

Gilleon was raised in Florida by his grandparents, and he spent time as an illustrator for NASA's Apollo space program. He also was an Imagineer at Disney.

His Native American heritage has had a strong influence on his work.

After the presentations and viewings of the artwork, those at The Art of Hospitality event had the opportunity to buy pieces from the artists during silent and live auctions.

Proceeds from the auctions and ticket sales benefit St. Joseph's College.

The school in Rensselaer closed in 2017, but efforts are underway to resurrect it.

"We have to come back, we will come back," said Bill Hogan, Ph.D., vice president for advancement at Saint Joseph's College.