

TRAVELAGE WEST,  
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DESTINATION:  
PACIFIC NORTHWEST

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## To the Max

Seattle's new hotel proves to be a work of art

BY MARTY WENTZEL

**A**t the new Hotel Max, the door to every guestroom is a work of art. From top to bottom, it's covered with a black-and-white image by a local Seattle photographer, creating an eye-catching and innovative statement from the moment guests walk in.

Hotel Max is the reincarnation of the former Vance Hotel in downtown Seattle. After a seven-month, multi-million-dollar renovation, the 163-room property opened on Oct. 15. Since then, the hotel has captured attention with its unusual decor and intelligent design — recently winning an honorable mention from the International Interior Design Association. The judges acknowledged Hotel Max for creating a unique experience while overcoming such challenges as small rooms, quirky bathrooms, cramped corridors and a limited budget.

Atop the 10-story building, a mammoth red neon "Hotel Max" sign sets the tone for arriving guests, who check in at a shiny, cherry-red desk and ride elevators of rosy-hued interiors. Stepping off the elevator to their floor, guests are greeted by a striped carpet of bright orange, deep red, gray and black running along the hallway. At the end of the hall hangs a touch of whimsy: an eye chart like those used by ophthalmologists. For the guestroom doors, designers selected works by 39 artists, whose subject matter

ranges from broad street scenes to intimate moments in the Northwest and around the world.

Inside each Hotel Max room awaits equally hip touches. Decor is decidedly contemporary, from the brushed stainless headboard to the curved shower rod with pinstriped gray curtain in the bathroom. Works by local artists hang on the charcoal walls. A dark rug offsets a red ottoman, and a long writing desk is flanked by a highly comfortable swivel chair.

Hotel Max makes a big deal about its personal service. The dual-line phone features a button labeled "You Got It," emphasizing that no request is too outrageous. The Do Not Disturb sign says "Yep" on one side and "Nope" on the other. Clients can personalize their mode of relaxation by picking a choice from a pillow menu. Guests can even request specific bedside reading from a spiritual menu, including books on several religions.

Other Hotel Max amenities include plush robes, an in-room bar, coffee maker, valet parking, 24-hour room service, round-the-clock use of a fitness center, high-speed wireless Internet access and a business center. Guests can lounge next to the fireplace in the lobby, and groups can meet in the Max Boardroom, which holds up to 15 people.

A plain, unassuming black door leads from the lobby into Red Fin, the attractive new restaurant. With a



Even the hallways are stylish at the Hotel Max.

contemporary mix of American and Asian foods, Red Fin has already earned praise for its range of breakfast, lunch and dinner fare.

In the morning, clients can order a smoked salmon scramble or go with a Japanese bento breakfast of miso soup, steamed rice, pickled vegetables and fish. Midday, they might decide on a burger or try stir-fried chicken and rice noodles. The dinner menu includes small plates of signature dishes like Indonesian chicken satay and large plates like grilled ribeye, not to mention an extensive sushi menu.

As guests check out of the hotel, they might want to buy a copy of "Maximalism: Art at the Hotel Max," a book showcasing its featured artists and photographers. It sums up the hotel's aesthetic spirit in fitting fashion. ■

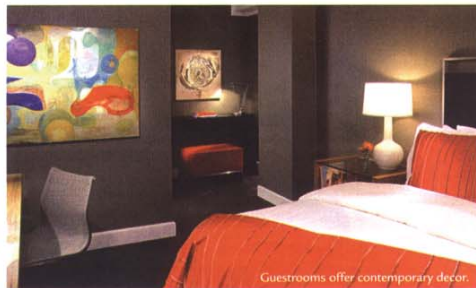
### THE DETAILS

Through Jan. 1, clients can book the Yin & Yang package including accommodations, an in-room shiatsu massage, souvenir Tai Chi instruction video, bottle of Washington-made sake and a meal at Red Fin (from \$249). Or clients can book the Wrap It Up package, which provides accommodations, hotel parking and free wrapping of holiday gifts while clients enjoy a hot toddy or hot chocolate by the lobby fireplace (from \$179).

Nightly rates for 2006 range from \$159-\$269.

**Hotel Max**  
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Commission: 10 percent ■



Guestrooms offer contemporary decor.