



By: Ken Hegan
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I live in hotels, paint on the walls



Hotels have been in the [news](#) this week for all the wrong reasons. By contrast, my stay has been much more pleasant.

All week, I've been staying at The Drake hotel in Toronto.

I'm having a fantastic time because I'm an Artist-in-Residence at this fun boutique hotel!

According to The Drake's [website](#), "promoting and sharing art has been an integral part of our vision and over the last few years we have had the pleasure of working directly with artists, developing site-specific installations to create a feast for the eyes throughout the building."

Their Artist In Residence program is "part of our commitment to bring forward emerging to mid-career artists to Toronto."

So if you're an up-and-coming artist (or, in my case, 'drifter'), The Drake will give you a discounted room if you stay for 7 nights. Their goal is to inspire artists with a funky environment so they'll create beautiful works of art that can be showcased in the Drake's funky lobby and staircases.

Me, I consider it an honour. It's like we're being commissioned to create wonderful pieces of art, and instead of being paid, we're getting a wicked deal on sleep. I'm no financial analyst but it feels like I'm almost sort of making money on this deal!! [It sure beats my day job (mail fraud) which is seriously hampered by this postal strike.]

Artists who've resided here before me include painters, sculptors, photographers, comic artists like [Jason Dasilva](#), and multimedia artists like [Graeme Patterson](#) who creates cool art out of tabletop hockey games.

So what'll be my artistic contribution? It's certainly a tough act for me to follow. Not only has The Drake been promoting cool art since its rebirth in 2004, the hotel *itself* is a work of art.

There's the vintage pommel horse in the lobby, which has no doubt inspired some late-night amateur-gymnastics. And as I walk up the two floors to my room, I pass a chandelier of colourful balloons and this lovely/terrifying painting.



My room is a sleek 150-square-foot box called a Crash Pad. It's a model of designer simplicity. Walk one step inside and, WHOMP, you fall onto the queen-sized bed. The wide-screen TV is tuned to a sexy video shot on the [Sky Yard](#) rooftop deck. And this is a nice touch: they've left me two expensive bottles of wine! I assume the wine is complimentary and supplied to me as 'artist-vitamins'.

The best part? The see-through shower overlooks your bed, so you can bring your spouse/friend to your room and give them a private showing.

But here's the thing: The Drake's a popular hotel but so quiet, it feels like I'm the only one here. Seriously. I haven't seen or heard a single hotel guest in 6 nights, and I've been lurking in the dimly-hit halls, hoping to catch them making art. No dice.

It's so peaceful at The Drake, it's like the entire hotel is all mine -- as if I'm the caretaker of my own private writer retreat!

All this solitude has been wonderful for my writing, too. In fact, I'm banging out a new novel on my trusty typewriter! The story's still rough in places, so if you've got time, I'd love to hear your feedback! Here's a photo of page 127:

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