CURATED FOR COLLECTORS

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ORACLE TIME



Blown Away

HUBLOT X JEFF KOONS BALLOON DOG

The Arts Issue

Anita Porchet, Hand-Crafted Dials & Europe's Best Art Hotels

$9.50

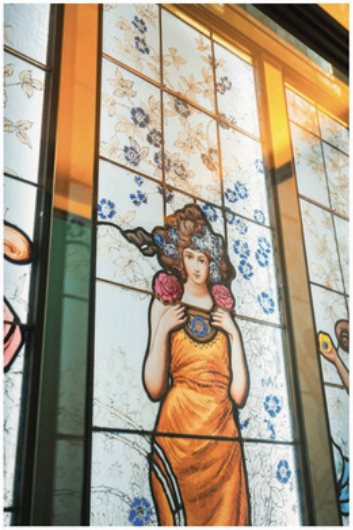
WHERE THE WALLS ARE THE ART

WORDS: *Tom Pettit*

— Let's face it, 'art hotels' can feel a little pretentious. Abstract pieces strewn through the hallways can add something, but they can just as easily leave you cold. The best hotels are made the way the best watches are, by one obsessive hand, with patience and proper materials, and are the art themselves; if a few well-placed, emotionally stirring pieces are added on top, so much the better. From a Michelin-starred palacete in Porto to a 16th-century house in the Swiss snow, we have selected five houses where the art is in the fabric of the building.

The most interesting hotels of the past few years have been built by people who collect: a Paris gallerist in Porto, a South African couple in Somerset, the owners of one of the world's biggest art galleries in the Swiss Alps. Each treats a building the way a collector treats a movement: something to be understood, restored and shown off, not decorated. We have stayed at Palacete Severo; the other four are on our list to visit.









PALACETE SEVERO, PORTO

■

Palacete Severo / Porto / From around €350 / palacetesevero.com / The detail: two sets of initials entwined in the library oak

— Run a thumb along the oak panelling of the library fireplace and you find an R and an F worked into the grain, entwined. Ricardo Severo, an engineer who built as an architect without ever holding the qualification, began this house in 1902 for his wife, Francisca Santos Dumont, sister of the aviator who gave his name to the first pilot's watch. One stained-glass window carries their names in full; the rest, made in Barcelona, spills colour across the room by mid-afternoon. A love letter before it was a hotel.

Géraldine Banier, the Paris gallerist behind Perspective Galerie, restored it over a year and opened it as a hotel in October 2024. Her gallery works out of the building, mounting three or four shows a year through the public rooms and bedrooms, everything for sale. The current show hangs until 17 January 2027.

Michelin has been twice in six months. Éon, chef Tiago Bonito's restaurant in the wood-panelled former dining room, took a star in March, and in September the hotel received a Michelin Key, the guide's newer rating for hotels. Éon serves a single tasting menu to around 20 covers, dinner only, Wednesday to Saturday, so book the table when you book the room. Lunch and breakfast are in the glass-roofed courtyard, on the original black and white mosaic, beside a granite Neptune whose serpentine S is for Severo.

Only 11 of the 20 rooms are in the original house, so be sure to ask for a Heritage room if you want the old fabric and those wooden shutters. The heated saltwater pool is outdoors, beside a 300-year-old chestnut. Adults only. From around €350 with breakfast.