

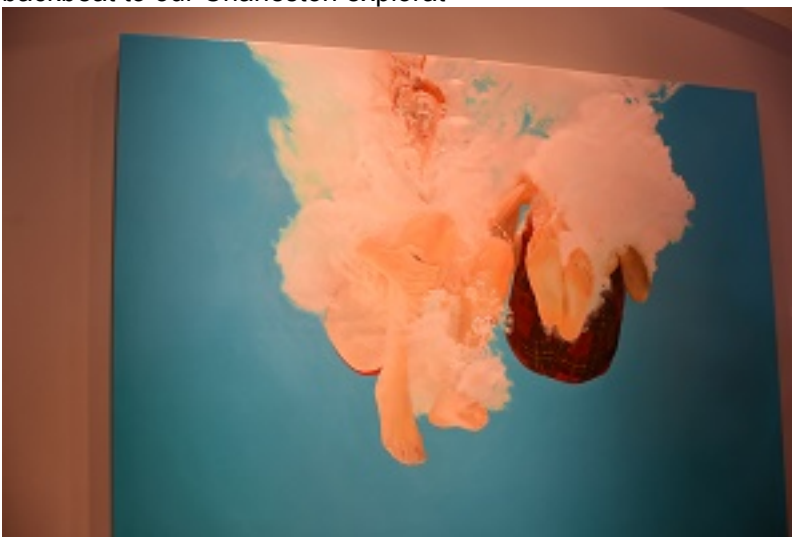
# Charleston's Vendue Hotel Mixes Art with Southern Charm

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Boutique hotels, like rock stars, need a way to stand out from the crowd. The Vendue, in Charleston, makes art its *sine qua non*, showcasing some 300 contemporary pieces in its public rooms and hallways. The property, located in the city's historic French Quarter, consists of 84 rooms in two buildings that originally served as warehouses in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The lobby's mix of high ceilings, white marble floors, black wrought iron gates (to separate the restaurant from the hotel's entry) and colorful canvases create a fun and friendly backbeat to our Charleston explorat



Matt Story's "Double Jump," with its turquoise water and white layered spray, hangs above the registration desk when we arrive, pulling us into the lobby. The colors and the movement

capture the exuberance of cannonballing into a pool, reminding us of the rhythms of our childhood beach days. Story's piece is part of "Fluent," the 30 artist show occupying the Vendue's main floors. The Vendue mounts two to three shows yearly.

Across the street we browse artist Fred Jamar's studio. Born in Belgium, Jamar, who now lives in Charleston, infuses the street scenes of his adopted city with chords of electric energy created by vivid colors and intensified, sometimes whimsical shapes. We can almost hear his canvasses.



We spot several of Jamar's works in the hallway en route to our room, a soothing oasis with exposed weathered bricks, an antique bed and bureau and sepia-toned prints of historic Charleston and its leaders on the wall. Other rooms are more modern. Alas, our room lacks a mini-fridge, handy for cold drinks on a hot summer day and an in-room coffee maker. We force ourselves out of the comfortable bed for coffee and muffins at The Press, the Vendue's coffee shop and bakery.

At the Drawing Room, Chef Jon Cropf serves up tasty contemporary southern fare that mixes Lowcountry and coastal notes. Good choices, and there are many, include prawns and grits, local snapper and the Moroccan couscous. Before dinner, we drink in the 360-degree view of Charleston's harbor from The Rooftop, winner of Best Roof top Bar in Charleston since 2007.

The Vendue puts on quite a show. It's no wonder that the hotel ranks number four on *Travel & Leisure's* 2015 list of the best small city hotels (those with fewer than 100 rooms) in the continental US. [thevendue.com](http://thevendue.com).