MANSION
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Ritz-Carlton Residences, Miami Beach, gave artist-in-residence Magnus Sodamin use of a 300-square-foot studio.

Painting Is Drawing Buyers

Homeowners are enjoying new works in their buildings, learning to paint and getting advice on their own art collections, as luxury developers add a touch of glamour to their complexes by luring artists to live and work on site

Units range from $2 million to $40 million.

ALEXIA FODERE FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL (4)

Top: Artist-in-residence Magnus Sodamin holding a workshop in his studio with the Rosenhaus siblings, Colton, Bronson and Aubrey, and, right, carrying his piece 'Blood Banana.' The wall painting in the common area is by Feng Lianghong. Bottom: The Ritz-Carlton Residences, Miami Beach, and, right, Cassandra Hall with her children, the Rosenhauses.

By Amy Gamerman

Aubrey Rosenhaus lives at the Ritz-Carlton Residences, Miami Beach, in a four-bedroom duplex that her parents bought for $2.81 million in September. The 13-year-old's new home has lots of fun features, including a rooftop pool deck, a movie theater and a 33-foot motorboat reserved for residents. But her favorite amenity is the Ritz-Carlton's gleaming art studio and its artist-in-residence, painter Magnus Sodamin.

"We would schedule these amazing classes every Wednesday. Magnus would watercolor with us," said Aubrey, who attended the classes with her brothers, Bronson, 7, and Colton, 5. "He has a bunch of his art hanging up, so when I don't know what to paint I look at one of his paintings."

Mr. Sodamin, 32, who creates vivid, oversize paintings inspired by south Florida's lush vegetation, enjoyed working with the kids in the Ritz-Carlton's Piero Lissoni-designed art studio until late March, when he began staying home out of concern for the coronavirus. "It's really clean, so it's like, I had to practice being clean," he said, of the 300-square-foot studio.

The newest weapon in luxury real estate's amenities arms race is a paint brush. Developers are forging partnerships with art academies, art consultants and working artists to provide a range of aesthetic experiences for their residents, including watercolor lessons, behind-the-scenes gallery tours, and advice on collecting and installing art. Some are even letting artists use high-price apartments as studios or living space on a short-term basis.

Although some programs and amenities have been suspended in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, developers plan to resume them once the virus no longer poses a threat. Most are continuing to support the artists and art institutions they have partnered with, and some are even looking at ways to offer virtual arts programs for their residents. At the Ritz-Carlton, the art studio is still open to residents. "The kids can still paint on their own, it's

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Residents of 108 Leonard in Manhattan will have perks such as sneak-peek tours of studios at the New York Academy of Art.

$4.3 MILLION
List price of unit being used as an artist's studio by Tabitha Whitley

FROM TOP: RICKY RHODES FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL (4); KELLY MARSHALL FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL (3)

The Artist As Amenity

Artist Tabitha Whitley, below right, is an artist-in-residence at 108 Leonard, below left, in Manhattan's Tribeca neighborhood. She has the use of a luxury two-bedroom for a studio, above and below. The unit's floors and counters are covered for protection.

Deb Clancy paid more than $3 million for her apartment at 108 Leonard.

Ms. Clancy, who is based in San Francisco, used digital prints and blue tape to map out where to hang some of her own art collection, including photographs by Marilyn Minter, left, and a piece by Kurt Pio, right.

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just way better with Magnus," said Aubrey's mother, Cassandra Hall, 42, a former Miami Heat dancer and Dolphins cheerleader.

Mr. Sodamin, meanwhile, has turned his bedroom into a painting studio. "I'm actually enjoying getting to listen to all my vinyls," he said.

For developers, bringing in artists is a relatively inexpensive way to add a touch of glamour to luxury buildings in a cooling condo market. For artists, the relationship with high-end developers can be more complicated.

In exchange for free space and exposure to a pool of wealthy potential collectors, they are expected to act as unofficial representatives for their tony new address. They must create work that is engaging and noncontroversial while keeping paint off costly finished floors—and putting up with interruptions from curious residents and brokers showing apartments.

Galerie, a 182-unit tower that opened in June 2019 in New York's Long Island City, has sought to capitalize on its location across the street from the Museum of Modern Art's PS1 to sell its units, priced from $590,000 to $2.595 million. Galerie's ArtBox—a glass-wall exhibition space off the front entrance—features a show of works on paper by Israeli artists Dede and Nitzan Mintz that the couple created while living rent-free in a Galerie apartment for three months last fall.

"For us, it was relatively easy to do," said Omri Sachs, co-founder of Adam America Real Estate and Galerie's developer. "You have an empty apartment sitting there; it's easy to furnish."

There are no plans to continue housing artists at Galerie, but Mr. Sachs extended the residency program to another Adam America development: Brooklyn Grove, a 184-unit building that opened in downtown Brooklyn late last year, with apartments priced from $575,000 to $2.75 million.

In November, Matthew Brinston and his wife, Marie Heléne Boone, moved from Texas into an $895,000, one-bedroom apartment for an open-ended residency. The developer also gave him unoccupied retail space on the ground floor for a studio. In return, the artist will create large-scale figurative paintings to be installed in Brooklyn Grove and other Adam America properties. His Brooklyn Grove paintings steer clear of provocative subject matter. He works on more experimental projects in his own studio in the Bronx.

"I probably wouldn't make a series of nude paintings for these people, just out of respect and knowledge of how these things work," said Mr. Brinston, 27, who was introduced to Adam America executives by one of his investors.

Mr. Brinston continues to live and work at Brooklyn Grove, although his studio isn't open to residents. Mr. Brinston said private studio visits for residents are tentatively planned for the future.

The Ritz-Carlton doubled down on the art factor in Miami Beach—a city that draws prominent artists and collectors from around the world for its annual Art Basel fair.

Mr. Sodamin's studio is on the ground floor of the complex of 111 condominiums and 15 villas, priced from $2 million to $40 million. It is stocked with easels, sculpting surfaces, paints, pencils and reference books, and features a 19-by-10-foot light wall that simulates northern light—the reflected, indirect light prized by painters. The plan is to host a new artist-in-residence every three or four months.

"Buyers are used to seeing very nice amenities—spas, restaurants—but this really wows them because it's so unique," said Ophir Sternberg, CEO and founder of Lionheart Capital, the Ritz-Carlton's developer in Miami Beach. "I think that room was maybe intended to be a wine cellar, but so many other projects have that."

Mr. Sodamin, a Miami resident, was selected from a group of local artists by the developers, with input from in-house curator Marcella Novela, who also is charged with installing art throughout the development. Mr. Sodamin's paintings hang in the Ritz-Carlton's hallways and are all for sale.

"The idea is that as people are moving in, they might see art they want for their units," he said.

108 Leonard, a luxury tower that opened in August in New York's Tribeca, is touting its partnership with the nearby New York Academy of Art to help sell its apartments. The 167 residences in the landmark Beaux-Arts building, designed by McKim, Mead & White, are priced from $1.775 million to more than $20 million.

The developers, managed by Elad Group, made "a very significant donation" to the NYAA, according to Angharad Coates, the academy's communications director. In return, 108 Leonard residents will get perks such as curated art in the building's public spaces and sneak-peek tours of artist studios when the academy reopens after the pandemic.

Tabitha Whitley, a 32-year-old painter and printmaker who is president of the NYAA's alumni association, was tapped to be 108 Leonard's first artist-in-residence in January. Her experiences illustrate the challenges of making art in a place where every square foot is worth thousands of dollars.

Ms. Whitley, who lives in Brooklyn and worked as a painting instructor in Tribeca until New York City's coronavirus shutdown, first set up her easels, paint brushes and some partially finished paintings in 108 Leonard's marble room—a cavernous, windowless chamber off the lobby—only to be moved out a few weeks later for construction on the space, a future residents' lounge.

In March, she was given studio space in a two-bedroom apartment with chevron-patterned oak floors, a Scavolini kitchen and a master bathroom walled in Calacatta marble that is listed for sale at $4.3 million. A dropcloth has been taped over the floors in the central living space, where Ms. Whitley's portraits of people wreathed with flowers and plants rest on easels.

Until the coronavirus shutdown, Ms. Whitley used the studio on most weekdays, picking up the key from a doorman and returning it by 6 p.m. Occasionally, she had to tidy up when real-estate agents showed the 10th-floor apartment to prospective buyers.

"I like to paint in shorts, so when I knew people were coming, I put on pants," said Ms. Whitley, who left the city to ride out the pandemic with family in North Carolina. This month, she will lead a virtual drawing class live on an Instagram account for residents.

Deb Clancy, 62, a retired management consultant and art collector based in San Francisco, bought a 1,600-square-foot, two-bedroom at 108 Leonard for just over $3 million in November. She said she is looking forward to visiting Ms. Whitley's studio someday. "Tribeca has always had that artist vibe," she said. "It's only appropriate that art should be incorporated."