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Restroom Art Gallery Opens in Ohio Village

Public restrooms in replica of 1880 Ohio train stations feature original paintings

YELLOW SPRINGS, Ohio, Jul. 23, 2006 By JAMES HANNAH Associated Press Writer



(AP) Call it Chagall in the stall, Picasso in the powder room.

Anyone who uses the public restrooms inside a replica of the 1880 train station in this southwest Ohio village will be treated to a display of original paintings on the walls.

Dubbed the ChamberPot Gallery, the exhibition that opened in mid-June is the brainchild of two local artists hoping to draw attention to this artist-oriented community and to lure into the village out-of-town hikers, bikers and joggers who use a bike path next to the station.

(AP)

"For the most part, everybody has been very excited about this. They just think it's a hoot," said Corrine Bayraktaroglu, co-organizer of the restroom gallery. "And we're getting puns left, right and center \_ take a peek while you leak."

Some of the 19 works, mostly by local artists, are bathroom-themed, including a dress made of pink, blue and yellow tissues, and a person's face screaming out: "Got Paper?" Some paintings are abstract, and other subjects featured include an outhouse and a person blowing soap bubbles.

"I have had one or two people who I asked to put art in the bathroom and they go, 'Eeeehttp://www,'" Bayraktaroglu said. "But being in the bathroom does say, 'This is fun.'"

The idea for the display got quick approval from the arts council and officials in the village of about 3,700, which has a 1960s feel with people in tie-dyed clothing and other hippie-like attire frequenting streets lined with artisan shops. The town is influenced by Antioch College, which has a history of social activism and civil disobedience.

Other places have given restroom users something to look at. Sports pages are placed on the wall over urinals in some restaurant restrooms, ESPN Zone in New York City has television sets tuned to sports inside its 15 restroom stalls, and the John Michael Kohler Arts Center in Sheboygan, Wis., has turned its six restrooms into virtual art museums. One restroom features colorful, intricately painted ceramic wall tiles depicting the history of architecture.

"It really is a good way to incorporate art into buildings," said Kevin Cole, spokesman for the Sheboygan center. "Those restrooms in Yellow Springs \_ more than likely \_ will become attractions in themselves."

The "Got Paper?" painting in the Yellow Springs restroom was inspired by an episode of the "Seinfeld" television series in which Elaine finds herself in a restroom stall without toilet paper.

"I kept thinking that's the first thing a woman asks herself: 'Is there paper in here?'" said Bayraktaroglu, the painting's creator.

Alice Robrish, of Yellow Springs, saw the exhibit recently and said it shows off the town's artistic roots in a place used by a lot of visitors.

"The dress made out of tissues \_ or whatever \_ is especially apropos to the setting," she said. "I just think it's fun."

Don Haddox, 66, of nearby Beavercreek, suggested moving the paintings down to eye level when he stopped to use the men's room while biking.

"The only problem I see is men walk into the restroom, and it's eyes straight ahead," he said.

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But Haddox called the paintings wonderful and said he likes the idea of bringing color to a normally drab place.

Lance Rudegear, who painted a pair of toucans in a piece titled "Rainforest Dream/Rainforest Scream," said he's OK with his work being displayed where people answer nature's call.

"When you do something unusual, you get attention. And artists want attention," he said.

The paintings will be displayed for a year. After six months, the artwork in the women's room will move to the men's room and vice versa.

On the Net:

<http://www.sitecreator.com/chamberpotgallery>

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