

# Avocet Hospitality Group Unveils New Art Program at The Vendue

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CHARLESTON, SC—When Avocet Hospitality Group's The Vendue reopens in full later this year, it will feature a new art program in addition to new architectural and operational updates. According to the company, it will be the only historic property on the peninsula dedicated to the arts.

The Vendue, which is made up of two main structures known as 19 and 26 Vendue and a number of warehouse buildings dating back to the 1780s, is now five months into its \$4.8-million renovation. After significant restructuring, five of the warehouse buildings are now internally connected for the first time in many years.

The property's new open design will deliver a new guest experience, including two new food and beverage concepts and an art exhibition space within the property's lobby.

"Since acquiring The Vendue in December 2012, we have been working to develop this concept of Charleston's first art hotel: a place where guests can be inspired while visiting our great city," said Jonathan Weitz, president of Avocet Hospitality Group. "By collaborating with the local art community, guests will be able to view and experience a vast collection of artwork from artists locally and from around the world."

The Vendue will house two to three individual art exhibits each year, designed and curated under the direction of Robert Lange Studios (RLS). RLS will work with Mary Martin, owner of the Mary Martin Gallery, to select the artists showcased in each. In addition to the main exhibition space of 19 Vendue, there will also be a second exhibit housed in the public areas of 26 Vendue, located across the street.

"The idea is that the guests are surrounded by thought-provoking artwork, no matter where they are in the hotel—the main exhibit space in 19 Vendue, our daily manager's reception at 26 Vendue, or while watching an artist create a piece of art in our working studio at 26 Vendue," said Weitz. "We are excited that, from an art perspective, The Vendue will reinvent itself at the end of each exhibit and serve as a blank canvas for RLS to create a new experience for guests."

The first exhibit will be called "Charleston: Here Now", which will run from May through October 2014 and feature approximately 65 pieces of art from more than 30 artists.

The hotel will have an on-site art concierge who will conduct daily tours of the

exhibit and be available to answer any questions about the artists showcased. The art concierge will coordinate special art-focused functions including artist lectures and receptions.

The restructuring of The Vendue will also introduce The Drawing Room, a new dining destination that will replace the property's former restaurant, The Library. Jon Cropf, formerly the head chef at Blu Restaurant & Bar on Folly Beach, has been named the executive chef of The Drawing Room. With a capacity of 50, The Drawing Room will be an art-centric environment, with a new lobby bar and a menu focused on shared plates and entrées.

Just down from The Drawing Room will be The Press, an on-site coffee shop serving Starbucks coffee and light bites. The Press is housed in the building that was the original home of South Carolina's first newspaper, The South Carolina Gazette. The paper was run by Elizabeth Timothy, the first female publisher in the United States. These two new concepts will join The Rooftop, which will feature a new bar and elevator when it reopens, as well as updated décor.

Pietro Giardini has joined the company to serve as GM of the hotel. The Vendue is scheduled to reopen in phases beginning the first week of April. The newly renovated rooms and The Rooftop will be open in time for the annual Cooper River Bridge Run. The remainder of the hotel, including the Drawing Room, will be open by May 1st.