

historic hotel

Nemacolin

Private Art on Public View

Woodlands Resort

by Shirley Moskow



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The 3,000-acre Nemacolin Woodlands Resort and sculpture garden is cloistered in the woods of Laurel Highlands, about sixty miles from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Featuring elegant accommodations, a spa, innumerable outdoor activities, and four and five-star restaurants, Nemacolin also houses an impressive art collection of more than 1,000 objects valued at over \$45 million. Daily tours take visitors to see a selection of works, which range from Medieval to modern art, sculpture, furniture, porcelain and glass, antique automobiles, and even memorabilia from Elvis, Marilyn Monroe, and an airplane once owned by actor Steve McQueen. With no discernible focus other than to bring enjoyment, the collection ranges from a carved and painted, six-foot-tall Punch figure from Andy Warhol's New York apartment to marble sculptures from ancient Rome. Some works, like the vintage Hermès centennial scarf, were acquired on impulse from a dealer. Others, like the bronze resort logo, *Fat Bird*, were commissioned.

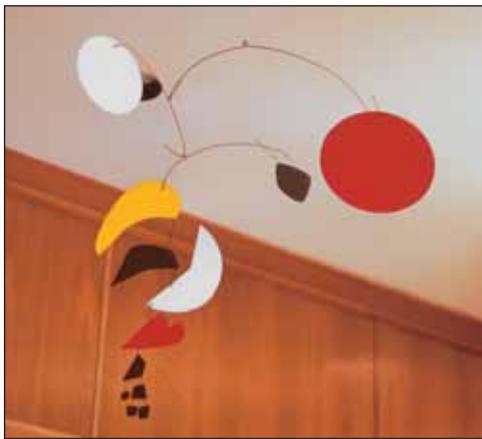
The resort and collection are the creation of Joseph A. Hardy III, founder and CEO of 84 Lumber Company, the country's largest privately-owned building materials supplier to professional contractors. Prior to his acquiring and expanding the property in 1987, it was a private game reserve and conference center. The name of the resort is shared with that of the Delaware Indian chief who pioneered trails through the region from 1749 to 1750. He is immortalized in bronze in the sculpture garden, standing on a rock with arms extended skyward. Sculptor Alan Cottrill (b. 1952) also cast life-sized statues of several other historic figures with ties to the region, including George Washington, whose

ABOVE:

Fernando Botero (b. 1932), *Little Bird*, 1988, bronze #3/3. Wildlife sculptor Barney Boller based the resort's logo, *Fat Bird*, after Botero's work, which graces the resort's main entrance. Botero is one of the Hardy family's favorite artists.

LEFT: An Aesthetic style billiard table, ca. 1870. One of four antique billiard tables on the property.





THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM UPPER LEFT:

Alexander Calder's (1898–1976) *La Lune et Les Fesses* mobile hangs above visitors' heads on the way to the wine cellar. Several of his gouaches are also in the collection.

Frederic Remington's (1861–1909) *The Rattlesnake*, ca. 1915, bronze. Not long after its purchase, a life-size replica, by local sculptor Alan Cotrill (b. 1952) was commissioned to welcome guests to the resort's Gun Museum.

The atrium is dappled with color from a nine-part Tiffany window. *Child with Book in Hand* by Chauncey B. Ives (1810–1894), 1863, is visible among the foliage.

A cameo glass elephant vase by master glassblower Emile Gallé (1846–1904) is purportedly only one of two in the world.

Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec (1864–1901), *Divan Japonais*, 1893. Original color lithograph on paper.

Fernando Botero's (b. 1932), oil on canvas, *The Reader*, 1982, is one of several works by the artist in the collection. Others include the sculptures *Little Bird*, *Roman Soldier*, *Head of a Girl*, *Man with Cigarette*, and the images *Girl with Bow* and *La Toilette*.

“fort of necessity,” hastily pitched during the first skirmish of the French and Indian War, is also memorialized in the nearby Fort Necessity National Battlefield.

Nemacolin welcomes guests as if they are visitors in a home. Guests sit on the ornate Gianni Versace chairs and play pool on the four antique billiard tables. The art collection is displayed throughout the buildings for all to enjoy. Visitors may walk past works by Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec (1864–1901), Fernando Botero (b. 1932), Frank Stella (b. 1936), or Norman Rockwell (1894–1978). Original gouaches and an eye-arresting mobile by Alexander Calder brighten the hall leading to the wine cellar staircase and the library where a Frederic Remington (1861–1909) bronze, *The Rattlesnake*, is prominently displayed. The paneled library glows with an assortment of table and floor lamps from Louis Comfort Tiffany Studios. In addition, a

nine-part Tiffany window is mounted on the atrium ceiling, and a three-panel Tiffany wisteria window accents the conference center. A rare elephant vase by master glassblower Emile Gallé (1846–1904) is among the few pieces displayed under glass. There are only two in the world. “It is truly one of the best examples of Gallé’s incredible gift for glasswork—outstanding,” states Hardy in *The Hardy Family Art Collection* catalogue.

“It’s nearly impossible to derive a theme,” says resident curator Brenda M. Sorice-Girod. “The art collection is a reflection of the Hardy family’s eclectic aesthetic.” They acquire objects that they like with no long-range plan. The result is idiosyncratic and surprising, with a charm that calls many guests to return time and again. 🍷

Shirley Moskow is a freelance writer specializing in art and antiques.