

## Bellagio To Hang Museum-Quality Impressionist Collection

Some art lovers who once turned up their noses at the mere thought of Las Vegas are reconsidering.

By October, they'll be lining up to get into the multimillion-dollar collection of impressionist art displayed along the walls and public areas of Bellagio, the new mega-resort that Mirage Resorts is planning to open that month. But savvy meeting planners will be there first.

Jody Tarchione, director of Las Vegas sales and marketing for USA Hosts, one of the city's largest destination management companies, is laying the groundwork for a new round of Las Vegas art tours. The top markets, she predicted, will be spouse and guest programs as well as specialized meeting and incentive groups.

For now, she explained, art in Las Vegas is a limited world. Local museums

usually display work by local artists. A few enterprising artists, including textile and metal designer Joyce Strauss, sometimes open their studio and workshops to select groups. A handful of casinos and hotels display reproductions — high-quality reproductions, but repros nonetheless.

But the 3,000-room Bellagio already is turning the local art scene on its ear, more than six months before its scheduled opening. Instead of reproductions, say resort officials, Mirage chairman Steve Wynn has opted for the real thing.

The main lobby will be dominated by a spray of light shooting from an original handblown glass sculpture by Seattle master Dale Chihuly. Interior decor will feature original works by Cezanne, Manet, Matisse, Modigliani, Monet, Renoir and other Impressionist masters.

Local insiders expect Bellagio to debut its own staff of art docents and tour guides. Meeting planners should be able to deal directly with the property sales staff to

arrange special showings and functions, but Tarchione suggested working with local DMCs to coordinate transportation.

— FRED GEBHART