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by Jane O'Neill | December 26, 2021 SHARE



An artwork by Louise in Burj Al Arab male prayer room

Burj Al Arab [opens to the public for its inaugural tours](#), revealing contemporary art created by one of its first-ever visitors.

When landmark hotel Burj Al Arab opened in 1999, [artist Louise Duggan](#) was among guests at the grand reveal of the KCA International-designed interiors.

Nearly a quarter of a century later and Louise's artworks are on show at the lavish property, with its contemporary new interiors created by KCA. In January 2021, Louise, founder of Ophelia Art Consultancy, was invited by KCA International and Burj Al Arab to develop nine artworks for a new visitor experience. The brief was that they should reflect the original interior design concept for the Burj Al Arab, which is based around the four elements of nature.

[Khuan Chew of KCA](#) created an environment of ornate grandeur with an explosion of colour. KCA revisited this theme within the new areas by bringing it up-to-date with a modern twist, clean lines, and elegant features. Now, for the first time, Louise's art and the interiors revamped by KCA are open not just to the hotel and restaurant guests. Now the public can tour around the Burj's ample gold leaf, dancing fountains and towering 180-metre atrium, as well as Louise's harmonising artworks.

Louise's concept

[Ophelia Art Consultancy](#) received carpet and fabric samples so they could create a seamless journey from the floor, furniture and art. One challenge was creating artworks that function within the already bold interior but still be powerful enough as stand-alone paintings.

Louise was inspired by a quote from Buddhist nun Perma Chodon: “It’s said that when we die, the four elements – earth, air, fire and water – dissolve one by one, each into the other, and finally just dissolve into space. But while we’re living, we share the energy that makes everything, from a blade of grass to an elephant, grow and live and then inevitably wear out and die. This energy, this life force, creates the whole world.

Gold lines to illustrate energy

“We loved this idea that while living we share the energy of the elements, air, earth, fire and water. Greek philosophy describes these as primal powers since none can survive without each other. All support life. To embody this, we used gold lines to illustrate the movement of energy,” Louise said.

She added: “We wanted to use the gold lines and elements of gold leaf to bring the paintings together as a collection, but more importantly, the gold in each artwork represents this idea that, as guests pass through the hotel, they leave their own trail of energy in this iconic building, therefore, adding to its life force. Anyone that has visited this iconic hotel has left a little bit of their energy here.

A personal project

The colours associated with the elements are earth, green and brown; air, yellow and white; fire, red and orange and water, blue and pastels. KCA initially incorporated these within the carpets and into the furniture, so Louise’s goal was to follow their lead and harmonise the energy into the art.

The Burj Al Arab works are an inherently personal project for Louise. She’s known the KCA design team for over 20 years and has admired the standing of the sail-shaped building since its opening.

The stand-out piece

Louise's standout piece for this project is the VIP lounge installation, she says. Four elements combine using yellow, red, blue, and green with overflowing gold lines dripping down the canvas.

KCA and Ophelia Art Consultancy worked closely together to develop the paintings to create one voice throughout the interiors. Louise says: "It was truly a celebration to work on such an iconic project." As a mixed media artist, she brought exciting, vibrant paintings to the space using different materials that playfully react with the light on the canvas.

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