

NEWS

Burj Al Arab celebrates new contemporary artworks and opens to visitors for the first time

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1999 saw the opening of Dubai's most iconic landmark and the globe's most revered hotel. The Burj Al Arab. Reportedly, the world's only 7-star hotel, it was proudly designed to resemble a ship's sail.

The hotel offers the ultimate in luxury and features extraordinary art, design, architectural splendour, ample gold leaf, dancing fountains and a towering 180-metre atrium. Until now, the unique hotel has dominated Dubai's skyline and has only been accessible by select advanced reservation holders and hotel residents. 22-years later, Louise Duggan's artworks and new contemporary interiors from KCA International form the exciting new visitors' experience. The Burj Al Arab is proudly offering access to all visitors so that everyone can enjoy the well-loved and iconic symbol of Dubai.

The Burj Al Arab is translated from Arabic into 'The Tower of Arabs'.

In January 2021, Louise Duggan, the founder of Ophelia Art Consultancy, was invited by KCA International and Burj Al Arab to develop nine artworks for the new visitor's experience. Duggan has come full circle. She attended the grand opening ceremony of the Burj Al Arab when KCA International completed the project almost a quarter of a century ago.



— Louise Duggan

The UK born Duggan graduated from Leicester University with a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) Degree in Art and Design and English literature. She continued her studies and trained with various award-winning design firms in London before moving to Dubai. Duggan spent her childhood on the vibrant continent of Africa. The colourful cultural heritage has been influential on her work as she deftly demonstrates elements of the African aesthetic.

Client brief

The original interior design concept for the Burj Al Arab was based around the four elements of nature. Khuan Chew of KCA International 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.

The brief was to create nine contemporary paintings to reflect the four elements but in keeping with the rich history of the Burj Al Arab. Designers were instructed to retain the feeling of extravagant opulence whilst creating a modern interpretation of their original

design.

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.

Duggan was inspired by a quote from famed Buddhist nun Perma Chodon. This became the base of their art direction and development. "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".

Duggan's pride and the standout piece for this project is the VIP lounge installation. She combined the four elements in their full glory, using yellow, red, blue, and green with overflowing gold lines dripping down the canvas. This painting encapsulates the energy, uniqueness and passion of the project.



The artwork in the bathroom highlights elements of natural marble. Duggan reflects the feminine fire element in the delicate gold lines of energy. Breathtaking zebra marble and dots of gold in the painting express the force of masculine energy. Splatters of vibrant hues of red, green, yellow, and blue represent the four elements.

The extraordinary Burj Al Arab experience commences with two paintings at the Mina a' Salam hotel. The journey is inspired by numerous gold lines that carefully weave their way through the painting and pick up the fresh verdant highlights from the carpets. Two striking paintings in the prayer rooms represent the grounding forces of the earth with deep brown tones. Duggan used plentiful gold in these paintings to continue the journey of discovery and illustrate the strength of the human spirit.

KCA and Ophelia Art Consultancy worked closely together to develop the paintings to create one voice throughout the interiors. Duggan expressed, "It was truly a celebration to work on such an iconic project".

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