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- 01 Fernando Botero's Reclining Woman
- 02 Picasso's Lithographs located at the Astor Bar

# In a Class of Its Own

The St. Regis Singapore is a dream for art collectors. It is the art that creates the ambiance in any space, and with a collection as diverse as The St. Regis Singapore, it is surely in a class of its own.

For generations, a very elite group of luxury hotels have been adorned with blue chip art collections. The St. Regis Hotel, founded in New York City in 1904 by John Jacob Astor IV was one of the earliest examples. The iconic "Old King Cole" painting by Maxfield Parish which has graced the "King Cole Bar" since 1932 is a symbol of sophistication and style. This tradition has continued to other St. Regis properties around the world, such as the Atlas restaurant at The St. Regis Atlanta. The Atlas Restaurant features over two dozen 20th century masters such as Chagall, Picasso and Van Gogh. This grand tradition

continues at The St. Regis Singapore. Art in luxury hotels most often reflect the eyes and the taste of the owner. This is certainly true of the St. Regis in Singapore. Cecilia Kwek, wife of owner Kwek Leng Beng was relentless in her quest for art when the hotel was under construction. Over a 6 year period, she acquired works from modern masters such as Picasso, Chagall and Botero, as well as championing local Singapore artists. She styled the hotel like she would style her own home, which is evident from the quality of the art selected.

St. Regis hotel is home to one of the



**Deborah Iskandar**  
Art Consultant

Deborah Iskandar is Principal of ISA Advisory, which advises clients on buying and selling art, and building collections. An expert on Indonesian and international art, she has more than 20 years of experience in Southeast Asia, heading both Sotheby's and Christie's Indonesia during her career before establishing ISA Art Advisory in 2013. She is also the Founder of Indonesian Luxury, the definitive online resource for Indonesian's looking to acquire, build and style their luxury homes.

**ISA Art Advisory®**  
Jl. Wijaya Timur Raya No. 12  
Jakarta 12170, Indonesia  
t. +6221 723 3905  
e. vip.enquiries@isaartadvisory.com



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03 An Anonymous Chinese painting "Gathering of The Immortals" located in the hotel lobby  
04 Li Chen's "Float To Sukhavati" near the pool

finest art collections in Southeast Asia. Consisting of more than 80 paintings, sculptures and engravings, the breadth is impressive. Some works are only accessible to the guests, but St. Regis has recently launched a program called The Art of Living, a 30-minute tour to enlighten visitors on the collection.

At the entrance to the hotel you are greeted by a monumental sculpture of a reclining woman by Fernando Botero. This artwork sets the tone of what to expect inside. Monumental sculptures by Botero are quite rare, and Botero, nearing 85 years of age, is reducing his output, especially for physically demanding sculptures. Inside the hotel on a table top, "Dancing Couple", one of his most iconic sculptures, is neatly

placed in the lobby.

It is a trademark in each St. Regis Hotel to have a mural behind the reception. In The St. Regis Singapore, it is dominated by a large Chinese mural called "Gathering of the Immortals" by an unknown artist from the 15th Century. The Gathering of the Immortals is a popular subject in classical Chinese literature, as it represents the Taoist belief of longevity, happiness and reward. It is a fitting subject to bring prosperity to the hotel.

The tea lounge in the lobby is like a private sitting room, adorned with works by some of the most famous Singaporean artists. The highlight is a rare painting by Georgette Chen, a pioneering female Singaporean artist. Georgette Chen

studied in Europe and was influenced by the impressionist artists, and particularly by Paul Cezanne. "Peking Scene 1940", situated in a quiet corner, captures the landscape of the Forbidden City with masterful, painterly strokes.

Mrs. Kwek was a strong supporter of Singaporean artists, at a time when they were very much out of fashion. Anthony Poon's "Wave sculptures" in red, titillates across the front of the hotel. Artworks by Nanyang style Chinese artists such as Cheong Soo Pieng, Chen Wen Hsi, and Chua Ek Kay's are prominently featured throughout the hotel. The tea lounge also includes works by Lee Man Fong, a Chinese artist who travelled to Indonesia before eventually settling in Singapore.

The art tour continues with works by international artists such as Marc Chagall in the Presidential Suite, and a series of 10 of Pablo Picasso's bullfighting lithographs displayed in the Astor Bar. The Astor Bar, named after John Jacob Astor IV, founder of St. Regis, takes you back in time to the days of jazz and Picasso's time in Paris. A bit of trivia, the "Bloody Mary" was invented by The St. Regis New York, so The St. Regis Singapore has adapted it to the chilli padi Mary to appeal to local tastes.

St. Regis hasn't forgotten contemporary artists either with more modern works appearing in the gardens, the restaurants and the lobby. At the hotel entrance you encounter a sculpture by Li Chen, the "Botero" of China. Li Chen is known for his voluptuous sculptures

based on Buddhist and Taoist symbolism. Another Li Chen sculpture is installed by the pool, a happy figure floating cloud, enjoying life. Other emerging artists on show include works by Eng Tow, one of the more prominent female artists. Eng Tow created her "World of Plants" series exclusively for the hotels inspired by the raw elements in nature. Other well-known painters such as Lim Joo Hong and Chen Ke Zhan created large scale works to complement the luxurious furniture and porcelain in the interiors of the hotel.

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