

Does Art Imitate Life?



What did Oscar Wilde mean when he wrote “life imitates art far more than art imitates life”? Is our journey in life influenced by the art we encounter? In the vision of two of Indonesia’s most esteemed property developers we can see where this phrase holds true. Ciputra and Pakuwon Groups are incorporating their passion for art into their projects in two distinct and unique ways. The recent openings of Raffles Hotel in Kuningan and Sheraton in Gandaria City have showcased stunning reproductions of modern Indonesian art.



DOES ART IMITATE LIFE?
CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT
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A reproduction of Lee Man Fong’s painting that is displayed at the Sheraton Gandaria’s Executive Lounge
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The giant glass mosaic at Raffles Hotel Lobby Area, a replica of Hendra’s painting, *Menyusui II*
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Hendra’s painting, *Arjuna Menyusui*, displayed in a puzzle-like style at the Writers Bar in Raffles Hotel Jakarta
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A hanging installation by Jean Michel Othoniel at the lobby area of Sheraton Hotel Gandaria

Art has always been a part of the standard hotel décor, primarily for ornamental and decorative purposes. However, in recent years art in hotels has evolved to a whole new level. Hotels are now presenting art as part of the guests’ experience and to bring local culture into the environment. Jakarta is no exception. Entering Raffles Hotel in Mega Kuningan, you can see there is something different. It is a homage to the art of Hendra Gunawan. Hendra’s name is certainly not unfamiliar among the country’s art lovers. But for the newcomer, Hendra was one of the fathers of modern Indonesian art. During the glory days of President Soekarno’s patronage, Hendra was imprisoned for 13 years as a communist

under the New Order. Upon his release from prison, he retired in Bali. Influenced by the batik sarongs and the bright sun of Bali, Hendra’s late works are a riot of color. Ciputra, an engineer and architect recognized Hendra’s genius and started to singularly collect his works. Owing more than 100 pieces of the maestro’s works, he has unlimited resources to interpret Hendra’s art. Hendra’s paintings and sculptures have been reproduced in many of their properties. In fact they have become part of Ciputra group’s trademark. But in Raffles Hotel, this has reached a whole new level. Stepping into the lobby area, one immediately encounters an immense glass mosaic that is a replica

of Hendra’s *Menyusui II*, one the artist’s last paintings. Created in 1982, it depicts a woman breastfeeding her child. A homage to the role of the mother in an Indonesian family, the mosaic dictates the daring palette of maroon, blue and gold in the hotel’s lobby. Behind the mosaic entrance, a giant-size brass relief of Hendra’s landscape painting encompasses three walls in the lobby area. In The Writers Bar, (its name derived from the literary luminaries who wrote about or resided at the Raffles Singapore such as Noel Coward, Somerset Maugham and Rudyard Kipling) the interior designers have cleverly incorporated colonial style wooden and steel shutters with a puzzle-like design of Hendra’s painting entitled



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In this Art in Design section of Indonesia Design, Deborah Iskandar shares her knowledge and love for art. Regarded as a pioneer in the auction world in South East Asia, she knows how to navigate the current evolving market trends of the Art World.

After more than 20 years’ experience collectively, within the art world, she founded her own advisory firm, ISA Art Advisory® in 2013. Being widely respected in Indonesia and Singapore ISA Art Advisory®, aims to aid buyers, sellers and collectors to approach the art world with ease and to build collections that will retain value over time.

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Arjuna Menyusui.

The tribute does not stop there. The legacy of Hendra's work is incorporated in all 173 guest rooms in design elements such as carpets, wall paintings, and even incised in the marble backdrop of the bathrooms. Raffles Hotel Jakarta is certainly unique in the sphere of art hotels for its engagement of a single artistic expression. Ciputra promised Hendra that one day he would create a museum as a legacy for Hendra's works. He has achieved that dream not only in the Raffles Hotel " but also in the Ciputra ARTPreneur Museum connected to the hotel. Combined together, Raffles Jakarta offers a brand new experience for its guests to have a deeper understanding of Hendra's masterpieces within the confines of luxury.

Opening in December, 2015 Sheraton Hotel at Gandaria City showcases the passion of its owner in a very different way. Under Pakuwon Group, Sheraton Gandaria City and Gandaria City Mall display a combination of western and Indonesian contemporary art, as well as reproductions of modern Indonesian masters.

Entering the lobby, beautifully suspended from the valuted ceiling there is a shimmering necklace in the work of Jean Michel Othoniel. The French artist is inspired by artistic materials that can change



properties, like a rite of passage from one state to the next. Working with murano glass, his artworks have morphed into sculptural necklaces or objects of desire. Floating above us, this artwork holds our gaze with its shimmery appeal.

Exploring the corridors of the hotel one can encounter a "who's who" of contemporary Indonesian artists. Featuring large-scale artworks by Yunizar, Handiwirman and Sjamsul Arifen, among others one can see and compare the styles of contemporary Indonesian art since 2000.

The hotel's executive lounge on the 21st floor reproduces artworks by Indonesian modern masters such as Romualdo Frederico Locatelli, Lee Man Fong, and Affandi. These artists are considered the pinnacles of the country's modern art. For example, Locatelli was a renowned Italian painter who established his career executing society portraits and orientalist subjects. Around 1939, he and his wife moved to Denpasar, Bali and it was his Indonesian paintings that became the highlight of his artistic output. Some of his most memorable paintings in

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CLOCKWISE FROM RIGHT

Other notable reproductions at the Raffles Executive Lounge: paintings by Romualdo Locatelli

A reproduction work of Le Mayeur's painting

One of the beautiful Affandi painting reproductions displayed at the Executive Lounge in Sheraton Hotel Gandaria

A view of the living room area in one of Raffles Hotel's Artist Suites

The magnificent brass relief of Hendra's landscape painting at the Raffles Hotel Lobby Area



Bali were of the Legong Dancers, of which two magnificent reproductions are on display. Further down, we encounter the "Three Faces of Affandi". Affandi is one of the pioneers of contemporary art in Indonesia. Adopting an expressionist style with hand painting techniques, his artwork is unique in the annals of Indonesian art history. The modern collection would not be complete without the inclusion of artworks by Le Mayeur and Lee Man Fong as well. Continuing the art tour, Gandaria City Mall which is connected to the hotel presents original sculptures by the world's most prominent artists such as Fernando Botero, Yayoi Kusama, and Robert Indiana.

With its impressive art presentation, Sheraton and Raffles hotels have managed to convey the respective owners' passion for art. As Jakarta is still lacking an art museum, we can have a glimpse of the breadth of modern and contemporary art in Indonesia, and how it can be incorporated into interior design in a very sophisticated and luxurious way. As Oscar Wilde said in *The Decay of Lying*, "Art creates an incomparable and unique effect, and, having done so, passes on to other things". But in the case of these two hotels, the art will endure and forever showcase the passions of their owners. **ID**