

The grand entrance
The Philippine Star
March 4, 2016



A year-in-the-making: One of the majestic floor-to-ceiling panels created by Bea Valdes for the grand ballroom of Shangri-la Hotel at The Fort

A Picasso at The Bellagio, Dalí at Dolder Grand, Matisse at Egerton House, a Basquiat at The Gramercy, Frank Stella at The Ritz, and Jeff Koons at The Wynn—a few stellar examples of famous art pieces housed in top luxury hotels all over the world. Investing millions in art is starting to become the de facto hospitality trend. Are hotels set to become the hottest new art spaces? **YStyle** checks in on the Shangri-La at the Fort to talk about their recent decorative commissions.

Earlier this week, *YStyle* had the chance to take a look at the newly opened Shangri-La at The Fort. Entering the hotel, you couldn't help but be in awe of how grand yet warm and receiving the newest member of this 5-star luxury giant. A mix of oriental and Art Deco combined with Philippine jewelry as inspiration for its interiors, the impressive lobby and massive Lasvit chandelier are exquisitely complemented by an installation at the reception created by designer Bea Valdes. She, together with a few of the precisely selected emerging and established artists, are now displayed in the first phase of the hotel's art unveiling.

“One of the main prerequisites for this project is appropriateness. I looked for artists whose works can hold their own in a space and engage the viewers, but at the same time enhancing the space they’re meant for,” says Miguel Rosales of Caramel, Inc. the art consultant for the much anticipated luxury hotel. Rosales and the Shang Group approached and sat down with each artist to carefully discuss each art piece that was commissioned.

A bag and accessories designer, Valdes was approached by Rosales to create a piece that was initially just for the hotel’s lobby reception. “When we first began talks about the artwork in 2015, I had hoped to express something that would flow— that physical aspect of movement, of pushing into the adjacent space was something that intrigued me. Always returning to the idea of momentum and permanence, “ says the designer.

Titled “Anima,” Valdes worked with familiar materials and fabrics she uses for her world-renowned bags and accessories— hand-sewn silk, tulle, metal mesh, resin, and crystal beads— each piece meticulously put together. “We began with the image of currents, something tidal. As we progressed, it shifted into something lighter, still remaining elemental, but more akin to a current of wind, a stirring of air, an upward motion of breath.”

Halfway through in finishing this piece, Valdes was given another task in this project. She was again commissioned to create the many floor-to-ceiling panels of the Shangri-La Fort’s Grand Ballroom. As Lesley Tan, director of communications of Shang Fort, walked us through the jewelry-box inspired hall, the finished piece was a sight to behold. The majestic towering panels crafted by the designer was simply breathtaking. Each piece resembling a tapestry that looked like either petals in full bloom or a bird ready to take flight.

“A singular vision, with a multitude of hands went into crafting this. It required many minds to figure out the technical aspects of these pieces- it remains truly the work of a community, in the spirit of Bayanihan, lifting up an idea, coaxing it into existence and eventually fastening it into a physical space, Valdes proudly explains.” It was a year in the making for the designer together with the help of 40 of her skilled artisans.

As Shangri-la Fort welcomes its guests on its first week run, a sense of pride comes to our mind. The locally handcrafted masterpieces created by Bea Valdes and the rest of the local artists commissioned are without a doubt at par with the world’s best. In which we ask, Picasso who?