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Art Is Trending At Hotels And Boutiques

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Someone told me, a long time ago, that a journalist seeing something occur once believes it's random; twice, it's a coincidence; and three times, the journalist will declare it a trend.

With that in mind, I've noticed that I'm seeing a lot more art exhibitions held in the public areas of hotels and luxury stores.

So, for example, a while back, David van Eyssen had works in the lobby of the La Peer Hotel. Currently, The Dream Hotel in Hollywood has a wall of curated digital art; I recently received an email from Lynda Keeler saying that her painting, *Road Map #59 (Exploring the Canyons of Little Tuscany)* is now hanging in the Amigo Room Cocktail Lounge of the Ace Hotel in Palm Springs. In Santa Monica, The Georgian

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Artist Shana Mabari
PHOTO BY ERIC MINH SWENSON, COURTESY OF SHANA MABARI

Recently, I attended a reception at the Hotel Bel Air for the installation of works by Shana Mabari (whose CalTech PST Art & Science exhibition I wrote about [here](#)), and works by Miya Ando at the Yves St. Laurent Rive Droite boutique in Beverly Hills.

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Miya Ando before her work at Yves St. Laurent Rive Droite in Beverly Hills, CA
PHOTO BY LORRAINE YOUNG, COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND YVES ST.
LAURENT RIVE DROITE

Hotel Bel Air is part of the Dorchester Group of Hotels which has begun holding exhibitions at their hotels including in Los Angeles, the Hotel Bel Air and the Beverly Hills Hotel. For the Hotel Bel Air exhibition, Lily Ackerman of Ackerman Studios worked in partnership with Cura Art's founders Liza Shapiro and Georgia Powell, and US Collection Manager Anna Wingfield.

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Installation view of Spectral Radiance by Shana Mabari at Hotel Bel Air
PHOTO BY JOSHUA WHITE PHOTOGRAPHY, COURTESY OF SHANA MABARI
AND HOTEL BEL AIR

Shana Mabari's installation features a set of colorful disks arrayed on both sides of a path to the dining area. They are low to the ground and at first you might not even realize they are artworks. But then as you are in the midst of them, their reflective surface and colors refract the landscape, the people passing by, and each other. At first, the discs seem almost weightless, impossibly balanced and floating above the

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There are two more new works placed in the reception area and its adjacent living room-like space. The disc in the reception area caught me by surprise. It sits on a pedestal several feet off the ground and so large that it seems like a religious or meditative object, whose size disappears as its color field envelops you.



Installation view Spectral Radiance by Shana Mabari
PHOTO BY JOSHUA WHITE PHOTOGRAPHY, COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND
HOTEL BEL AIR

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Mabari's discs are certainly works of art but they are also feats of science and engineering, recalling the California Light and Space movement.



Installation view of Spectral Radiance by Shana Mabari at Hotel Bel Air

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I spoke with Hotel Bel Air's manager, A. Christophe Moje, who said that he hoped that the art, which will be changed several times a year and occupy different locations in the Hotel and its gardens, will encourage guests and visitors to explore the grounds (sort of like a treasure hunt) and will surprise and inspire them.



Installation view Mono No Aware by Miya Ando at Yves St. Lauren Rive Droite, Beverly Hills
PHOTO BY LORRAINE YOUNG, COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND YVES ST. LAUREN RIVE DROITE

Mono No Aware, Miya Ando's exhibition at Yves St. Laurent Rive Droite in Beverly Hills, is the name of a Japanese Buddhist concept about the sadness of

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things, Ando told me, is a way in which a human being is “no different than a flower or a shooting star.”

Miya Ando is Japanese-American and was raised both in a Buddhist Temple village in Japan and on a 25 acre homestead in the Santa Cruz Mountains redwood forest. Being biracial, for many years, Ando struggled, she told me recently, with being neither fully accepted as Japanese, and not feeling fully American. However, through her Art, she has come to realize that the most interesting place to be is in the in-between.

Ando graduated from Berkeley with a degree in East Asian Studies, and from Yale in Buddhist iconography, before apprenticing with a master metalsmith in Japan. Her knowledge and appreciation of Japanese craftsmanship informs her art.

Realizing the impermanence of our existence conducted in moment-to-moment consciousness, Ando believes, creates empathy for ourselves and all things. In Japanese philosophy, Ando sees a duality in everything, such that “Beauty is imperfection.” As an expression of *Mono No Aware*, “the more imperfection, the more beautiful .. because you can feel empathy for it,” she told me.

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January 22, 2021, Matsu Pine Shou Sugi Ban Silver by Miya Ando
PHOTO BY PAVLO TEREKHOV, COURTESY OF STUDIO ANDO

In a block of charred cedar wood that Ando has placed in her sculptural installations, we can see time in its rings, and beauty in its materiality. In its charred outside, we see its impermanence, and also the contradiction that a charred piece of wood is more fireproof than a living tree. At the same time, in the silver nitrate coating we see reflections of ourselves.

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Installation view *Night Could Mirror 1:20 AM, July 10, 2022*, by Miya Ando
PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND YVES ST. LAUREN RIVE DROITE,
BEVERLY HILLS

For Ando, who has pictorially chronicled the sky and clouds as a visual diary, each moment is unique, almost its own fingerprint, telling us place, time, season, She uses the reflective silver in her work, as each moment is also a reflection of our own mood, and what is occurring, however fleetingly, in our own lives.

There are several paintings of clouds on brushed aluminum (which also reflects light). One is in a round frame, which Ando explained, is like the moon windows in a Japanese home that look to the garden. In another, in which Ando conveys the contradictions of the night sky, the top half of the work is obscured and the clouds appear faintly below.

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Galaxy 10 by Mia Ando
PHOTO BY PAVLO TEREKHOV, COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND STUDIO ANDO,

There are also four photographic prints on exhibit, exposures made using black paper and powdered silver, part of a series about the Milky Way, or as it is referred to in Japan, the Silver River in Heaven. These are part of a suite of 24 images based on an ancient Japanese agricultural calendar (made up of 24 micro-seasons).

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Installation view, Ryōan-ji by Miya Ando
 PHOTO BY LORRAINE YOUNG, COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND YVES ST.
 LAUREN RIVE DROITE

At the rear wall of the store is a large installation. On the floor is a rectangular space filled with small stones. Blocks of charred cedar wood to which Ando has applied reflective silver nitrate have been intentionally arrayed in a pattern. Although the scale is smaller, the blocks are configured in a way that mirrors Ryōan-ji, Japan's most famous dry rock garden in Kyoto.

Behind the rock garden, against the wall is a huge painting of clouds (so big it is two large aluminum plates seamed together). Ando joked that her husband referred to

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Yves St. Laurent Rive Droite is a fashion boutique where the clothes and items offered for sale are presented sparingly, with a great amount of empty space, as if the clothes or items were art objects, adding to the perception that these clothes are worth their expense. This is a merchandising strategy first popularized in the U.S. by Japanese designers like Issey Miyake and Yohji Yamamoto, so it seems entirely appropriate to display Ando's work there.

I suppose it is incumbent on me to note that artworks displayed in hotels or luxury boutiques are more likely to be abstract and conceptual rather than political or shocking. And as DesertX affirms, art need not be exclusive or a luxury item for the well-dressed and well lodged. And although both these shows are well curated, neither is meant as the kind of art historical presentation that a museum does.

Nonetheless, the idea that Art should be part of our environment is a welcome one. If people gather in hotels, and frequent designer stores, why shouldn't they be exposed to art there? These may be private enterprises but they are spaces open to the public.

You never know, the next time you are at a hotel, or a fashion boutique, an encounter with art may be the best bargain there.

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