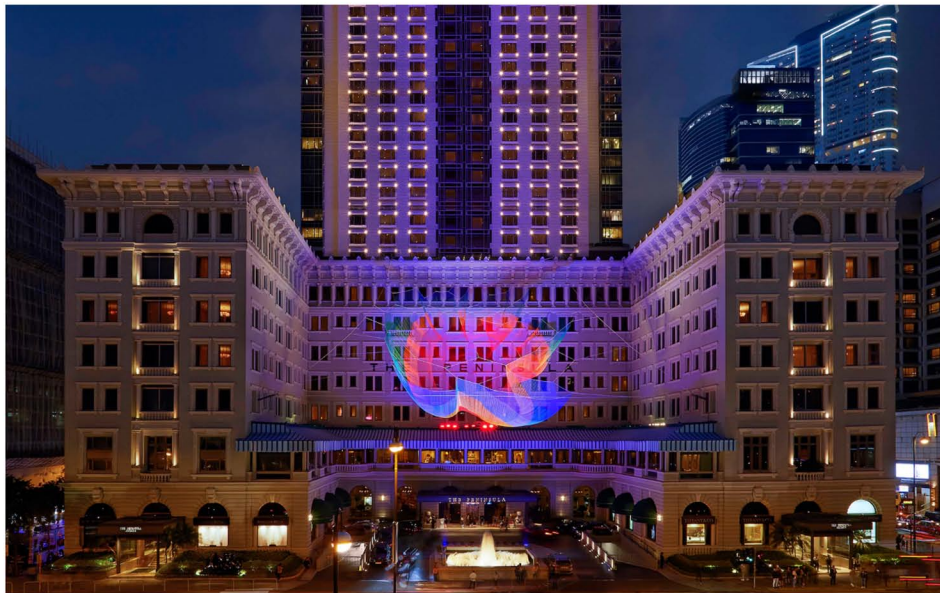


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## An abyss at breakfast and a gong bath in a boutique: Peninsula Hotels' Art in Resonance packs plenty of surprises



Janet Echelman's *Earthtime 1.26*, draped between the wings of The Peninsula Hong Kong hotel CREDIT: SIMON J NICOL

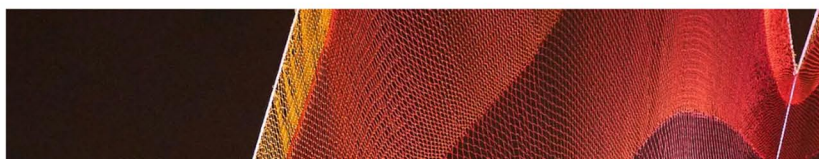
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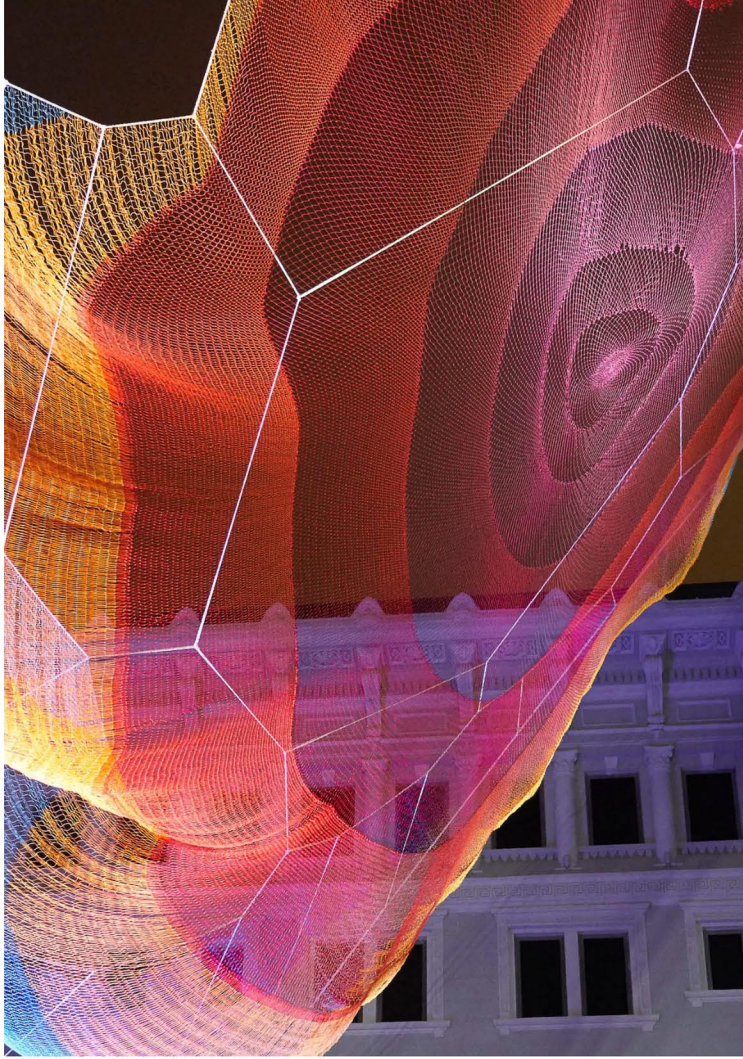
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When the wind blows in Hong Kong a rainbow ripples in the arms of The Peninsula hotel. Draped between its wings like laundry over rope, Janet Echelman's *Earthtime 1.26* is an immense, multicoloured and unfurled fishing net afloat above The Peninsula Hong Kong's forecourt fountain. Its languid undulations are especially beautiful in the sultry night air, when a kaleidoscope of spotlights sharpens its spools of cherry red, dark orange and canary yellow.

Unveiled in March, the installation is the showstopper piece of the newly devised Art in Resonance programme currently on show at the city's quintessential grande dame – and a beacon for the unique cultural immersions that will be on offer across the entire Peninsula Hotels portfolio in the months and years to come.







A close-up of Janet Echelman's Earthtime 1.26 at The Peninsula Hong Kong CREDIT: SIMON J NICOL

The premise behind the initiative is fairly simple, even if the subsequent logistics of erecting a piece such as Echelman's are exceptionally complicated.

The original Peninsula hotel and its continued flagship, the Hong Kong property has long showcased estimable art; you can't budge at the check-in desk for fear you'll bump into one of the many Fernando Boteros. But in recent years its creative approach went a bit renegade. A three-year partnership with the Royal Academy produced all manner of ambitious installations, not least British artist Richard Wilson's full-size bus that in 2015 teetered over the edge of the hotel's seventh floor – an anxiety-inducing homage to the 1969 heist film *The Italian Job*.



Australian artist Timothy Paul Myers' Alizarin stands in the hotel's gilded lobby CREDIT: SIMON J NICOL

Now the Art in Resonance programme will take that sense of playful, unpredictable cultural activity even further. To coincide with Art Basel Hong Kong, a spread of specially commissioned artworks will be revealed at The Peninsula Hong Kong each spring. They will remain in situ for approximately three months before a selection is transferred to another Peninsula property to be joined by other new creations.

While those pieces will differ wildly, common threads will weave the ever-evolving collection together. Rather than relying on the recognition that goes with buying Old Masters, Peninsula Hotels will commission, support and elevate emerging and mid-career artists. Their creations will often be immersive works designed to appeal to all the senses – so expect sound art and scent to feature – and will be accessible to all, not just hotel guests.



The artist Janet Echelman at work CREDIT: UNGANO & AGRIODIMAS

For Carson Glover, the hotel group's brand marketing and communications vice president, the inauguration of the Art in Resonance programme provides "an opportunity to do something truly meaningful for guests and locals, and to raise the bar in the hotels market by moving beyond big names and beyond art as decoration".

It will also provide a means of introducing The Peninsula to a new generation of potential customers. When Glover moved from New York to Hong Kong to join the company, a succession of local residents would regale him with tales from when they visited the hotel as children, nostalgically detailing the plushness of the carpets underfoot and the pastries they sampled during afternoon tea.



With Art in Resonance it was crucial that the works "activate the senses and put a smile on people's faces, because our senses create memories and that's what sticks," says Glover. "We want to plant a seed."



An abyss by breakfast: Iván Navarro's HOME is installed by the hotel's Veranda restaurant CREDIT: SIMON J NICOL

Now when visitors approach The Verandah for breakfast they can get lost in Chilean artist's Iván Navarro's *HOME*. An illuminated cube with a one-way mirror for a roof and a reflective floor, its interior seems to descend eternally. Occupying a former boutique in the Peninsula Arcade, The Wonder Room by Shanghai collective Minax, is a timber-framed cocoon where occupants can sit barefoot as meditative gong sounds play and the scent of wood wafts into consciousness.

Families taking afternoon tea in the gilded lobby, meanwhile, can admire Timothy Paul Myers' *Alizarin* as the musicians perform. Depicting a meal taken under the shade of two 13ft-tall budding trees, the sculpture is covered entirely, from the tiniest petal to its elegant candelabra, in deep-red felt.



Alizarin is covered entirely, from the tiniest petal to its elegant candelabra, in deep-red felt CREDIT: SIMON J NICOL

Another momentous work, it is unmissable to all who enter the hotel and a testament to how sincerely The Peninsula is committed to the Art in Resonance programme. People queue to take afternoon tea here and the artwork takes up precious space previously used for seating, while the weights and mechanism that support Echelman's installation are located in two prime and lucrative Victoria Harbour-facing suites, making them unavailable for at least quarter of the year.

That spirit of generosity has been extended towards the participating artists too. Navarro tells me that the team at the Peninsula have been "amazing supporters, very open, patient and generous and wanting us to do our best. It's not common to find clients like that. Most people just want something cheap, easy and quick." Myers is similarly effusive: "As an artist I don't think I was ever so fully supported on a previous project. A commission like this is a gift."



MINAX founder Zhi-gang Lu inside The Wonder Room CREDIT: SIMON J NICOL

Clearly the pair's contributions pleased The Peninsula's bigwigs as well. Both Navarro and Myers' works will be installed at The Peninsula Paris hotel from late September, alongside ambitious new commissions to include one creation from a local artist.

Bettina Prentice and Isolde Brielmaier, curators of the Art in Resonance programme, won't yet divulge if any forthcoming projects will necessitate the cranes and countless technicians and engineers that were required to hoist *Earthtime 1.26* into place, but they're determined that future iterations will make a similar impact.



The hotel's rooftop restaurant Felix, which provides an exceptional view of Hong Kong island's radiant skyline and the nightly Symphony of Lights

"We don't want to make something that's for the few," explains Prentice. "We want to engage with people, to introduce art that will cross cultural, generational and socio-economic backgrounds."

In Hong Kong, at least, it feels like it's mission accomplished. After another dim sum breakfast at The Verandah, I pass children transfixed by the abyss that plummets from the base of HOME. Later downstairs, I see couples admire Alizarin's plushly upholstered pastries and cake stand as they wait in line for their own sandwiches and scones. Down a corridor, on-the-go Hong Kongers have left the outside swelter for the temporary respite of The Wonder Room.

It's only when I go outside, however, that I see how broadly Art in Resonance's aspirations have been realised. After crossing to the Avenue of Stars to watch A Symphony of Lights, the multimedia show that sees synchronised lights dance across the skyline every evening, I turn back to face The Peninsula.







The Peninsula Paris rooftop. The hotel will host the next incarnation of the Art in Resonance programme from September 2019

It's night-time again and Echelman's radiant installation is billowing in the breeze, its waves of colour glinting at the crowds below. I'm surrounded by couples, families, friends and loners like me, who watch this curious dance overhead, pointing, taking photos, smiling.

Echelman had told me that her works rely on a sense of discovery. All around me locals and visitors were turning a corner to be faced with this unexpected beauty. It felt as though The Peninsula had bestowed a gift on the city.

*The Art in Resonance programme continues at The Peninsula Hong Kong until June 21. Rooms at the hotel start from HK\$5,808 (£565) per night, including breakfast. The Art in Resonance programme will be on display in The Peninsula Paris from mid-September to mid-December. Rooms at the hotel start from €970 per night (£835), including breakfast.*



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