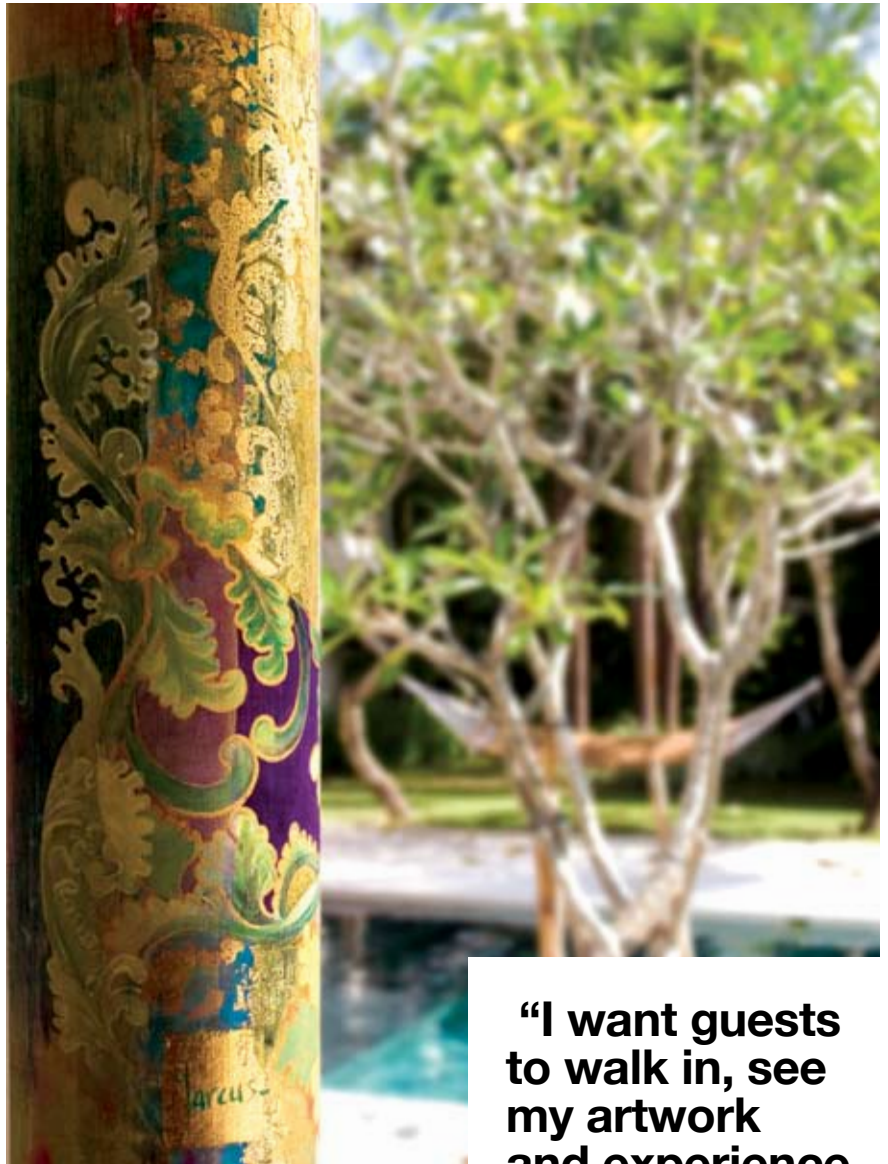


For the last three months, Marcus Walkley has been beavering away behind the walls of Four Seasons Resort at Jimbaran Bay. The Resort has been immaculately maintained over the 14 years since it was built, and now a gentle renaissance is taking place with the renovation and upgrade of its 147 luxurious villas. Marcus has been commissioned to create a series of paintings, one for each of the bedrooms of the newly renovated villas.

# MARCUS WALKLEY, AN ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE



**“I want guests to walk in, see my artwork and experience a feeling of well-being and happiness”**

It was when he was working on a recent project re-gilding the entrance lobby dome at Four Seasons Singapore that Australian artist, Marcus Walkley, was invited to apply for a commission in Bali. His brief was to come up with a concept for a themed series of paintings, and then submit a few pieces for consideration. He had been to Bali once, many years earlier, and vividly remembers the soft, warm tropical colours of the Balinese textiles and batiks that he used to trade at market stalls in Australia. After studying the pages of as many books as he could muster on Bali, he came up with a concept that was bright, minimalist and contemporary, with at least one subtle reference, in each painting, to the classic imagery of the island. His work was chosen because it encapsulated something of the soul of Bali yet, freshly created, it was completely different from any other style of

artwork already present here.

With a background in fine arts, Marcus is already well-known for his cutting-edge, directional style. His artistic journey has taken him through all spheres of conceptual design from theatrical art, to wall glazes, gilding, murals, and colour design. His knowledge of traditional arts and finishes, as well as new modes and materials, allows him to create unique contemporary works. He has completed numerous commissions in restaurants, hotels, nightclubs, public places, corporate spaces and private residences in Australia, Spain, Denmark and Singapore.

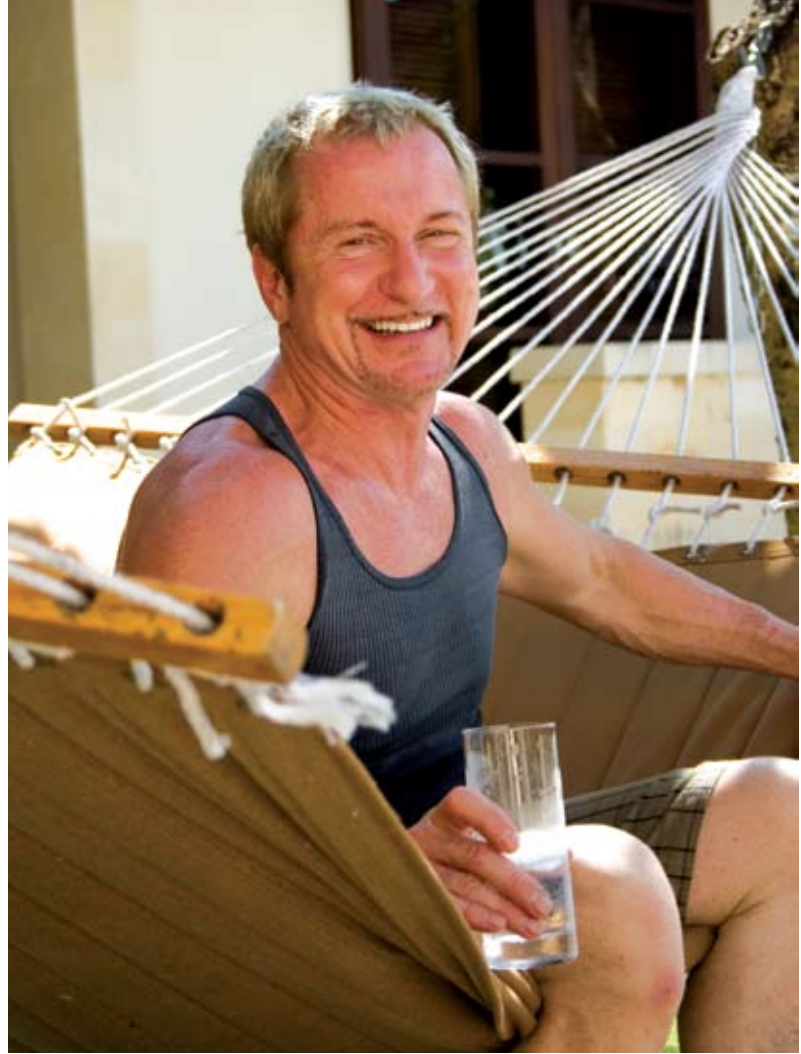
His modern minimalist approach to his Balinese project leaves each background partially raw; this Zen-like use of space creates a feeling of

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## Marcus combines the ravishing colours of the island with ancient symbolic elements

depth, accentuating a textured negative facet that is as important as the painted areas. With his trademark media of 24-carat gold, Dutch metal and acrylic paint, on vertical 30 x 90-centimetre canvases of natural, unbleached raw linen, Marcus combines the ravishing colours of the island with ancient symbolic elements of Balinese Hinduism and culture. His iconic imagery reveals elaborately carved Balinese ornamentation, while celebrating nature with flowers, petals and leaves – components of the Balinese offerings to the gods – punctuated with pools of gold. “I want guests to walk in, see my artwork and experience a feeling of well-being and happiness”.

The artist’s distinctively personal technique plays with texture and illusion for the surface effects, while an intense desire for accuracy means that his work is very precise and linear, built upon sparse applications of paint, water-washed brush strokes and clean edges. The shimmering 24-carat beaten gold is set off by the application of old-fashioned machine-beaten Dutch metal, which is a very finely beaten skin of brass. There is a visible difference; the 24-carat is a richer colour, while the Dutch metal is just a little bit paler, creating a variance of tone.

Furthermore, the mixed metals will oxidise at different rates prior to being sealed. The artist creates a cracked patina by manipulating the metal as he adheres it to the canvas, forcing it to crack open, thereby producing veins that are reminiscent of traditional batik. Further tonal effects are produced by watercolour washes with antiquing glazes applied over the top. Marcus explains, “the 24-carat gold is a very soft and impressionable metal, so it’s easy to impregnate with another tint or tone, which means I can create a lovely variance of lemon yellow, for example, going through to burnt copper, orange and gold leaf”. Indeed, the paintings are saturated with the indigenous colours of the island – the turquoise of the ocean, the magenta of the bougainvillea, the vermillion of the hibiscus, and the deep purple and burgundy hues of the orchids. Another colour that Marcus loves is chartreuse – the light yellowish-green of new vegetation “I’ve used this colour ever since I started painting, I always find an excuse to put it somewhere, it’s so fresh and clean and cool”.

Every painting, meanwhile, draws reference to the traditional icons that are found in classic Balinese art, such as birds, animals, flowers, and Balinese Sanskrit. The image of a gentle turtle



**“I have been given the most respectful residency that an artist could ever dream of.”**

dove is taken from a carved bed head, a symbolic representation of the sun was uncovered from within a traditional batik design, and a bull's head was a tiny little detail that Marcus found on a gilded woodcarving. Another painting portrays a peacock with a Garuda-like head and hand-like feet, while the beauty of Balinese hands is illustrated again and again in the motion of dance. “I was awestruck by the hands” says Marcus, and the butterflies? “Well, the gardens are full of them!” The artist also depicts a cup and cornucopia, “these are Dutch-influenced icons”, he explains, “the original artwork where I found this reference is about 160 years old”. The paintings express a sense of light, atmosphere and mood, transcending the techniques that were employed to create them.

Upon getting the commission, Marcus visited Four Seasons at Jimbaran. He had expected to be producing the artwork from his home studio in Melbourne, but to his delight he was offered a residency for the period of time that it would take to create 160 paintings. He has been living in one of the Resort's Private Estates, a sumptuous residence, complete with lotus ponds, huge swimming pool and ocean views, screened from the outside world by a Balinese wall. His alfresco studio is a poolside verandah. “I am so privileged to be given nothing but abundance with which to paint from; to be housed in what I can only describe as a ‘palace’, where no demands are made of me whatsoever. I have been given the most respectful residency that an artist could ever dream of.”

Look out for a forthcoming exhibition of Marcus Walkley's artwork at Ganesha Gallery, Four Seasons at Jimbaran Bay, scheduled around the end of the year.

[www.walkleyart.com](http://www.walkleyart.com)

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