



Artist Eric Jiaju Lee

# FAN FARE

With a pastiche of vibrant colors dripped and smeared across a 5-foot-wide arch of red-orange silk, the celebrated New York artist Eric Jiaju Lee intends to greet visitors to the Mandarin Oriental, Las Vegas at CityCenter with a symbol of both the stately elegance that is the resort's calling card, as well as the sparkle of its location on the Las Vegas Strip.

Mandarin Oriental has a tradition of commissioning unique fans for each of its properties, and so it fell to Lee this time to conjure up an image that could become iconic for the resort. While the final effort has yet to be unveiled publicly, Lee eagerly explains the special resonance of the hues he used.

"One thing that strikes me about the region is the rusty desert, so that's the base color," says Lee, an avid rock climber who has tackled Red Rock Canyon. "And then, thinking about the urban landscape and the luxury factor and the nightlife in Las Vegas, I knew I wanted to bring gold and glitter into it. The blue refers to the blue of this incredible blue sky and green refers to desert flora,

The vibrant color palette of the Las Vegas fan reflects the grandeur of the city and its surrounding landscape



because while people think of the desert as an arid place, there is really a surprising amount of green in it."

Fittingly, Lee sees his selection an act of *yuanfen*, a Chinese phrase that roughly means predestined good fortune. The 38-year-old Brooklyn-based artist only began painting fans in 2007 as a means of connecting with the heritage of his grandparents, who fled the Chinese mainland during the 1949 Communist Revolution. He was showing his work at an Asian art presentation during Art Basel Miami last December when Mandarin Oriental executive Danielle DeVoe discovered and signed him.

Lee, whose work is usually on display briefly before being bought by collectors, is especially thrilled that this one will be a fixture in the Mandarin Oriental, Las Vegas' 23rd floor Sky Lobby for years to come, as well as reproduced on the hotel's printed materials. "There's going to be more eyes seeing the painting than anything I've done," Lee says. "The painting will be there on display, not in a warehouse. That way, it will belong to everyone."

by STEVE FRIESS