



Eyes Wide Open

THE SAN FRANCISCO-BASED INTERIOR DESIGNER AND GALLERY OWNER ANA MARIA DELGADO HAS NOT ONLY AN EXQUISITE EYE BUT A WELCOMING SPIRIT, WRITES VICKI A DE LEON

THE WEBSITE OF Anamar, a gallery of international decorative arts in San Francisco, is a simple grid of clickable photos of uniquely sourced items. In the middle of this grid is a primitive 14-inch wooden figurine labelled *bulul*, a carved Ifugao rice god, with raised arms above his head, and written next to the photo is the word “sold.” Gallery owner and namesake Ana Maria Delgado intends to keep it that way. “It’s one of the more beautiful things I’ve seen in a long time. It epitomises what I represent, who I want to become—which is to be able to surrender to the universe.”

She opened the gallery in 2008, and has been an interior designer for the past 20 years with her own firm, Delgado Design, a full-service interior design company. She left Manila at the age of 13 for studies in Europe, which gave her the exposure to experience the world and its inspirational surroundings. “I think when you are in design and are creative, you don’t limit yourself only to what it is you do....you have to see everything,” she says, so she takes pleasure in the opera, ballet, modern dance, jazz and classic and contemporary art. She also enjoys the people who surround these arts. “The culture is important because it brings colour, texture and background to make you understand ‘why.’”

After 10 years of living in England and Switzerland, Delgado moved to San Francisco,

where it was time to experience life in America. She has been familiar with city life, its big culture and beautiful lifestyle, and yet she says, “My church is the outdoors—I enjoy being surrounded by nature and being active; and if I can have both the city and the countryside, Northern California is the perfect place. I like being cosmopolitan, but I need my weekend getaway.” She is as comfortable all dressed up for the opera as she is in jeans and a T-shirt for some hiking. “What it is all about is how comfortable you are with yourself,” she says.

This sense of being true to oneself manifests itself in the way Delgado now lives her life and what inspires her work. For this shoot, she was in her element as she wore pieces from Eairth (designer Melissa Dizon’s line of organic materials and natural dyes), such as an indigo long-sleeved dress, a white flowing gown or a tutu-style skirt and a cardigan. At home, she has a passion for cooking and preparing delicious and healthy food. Whether her refrigerator and pantry are well stocked or not, she is able to create dishes on a whim. She creates interiors in much the same way. “What inspires me with my design work is to ask, what do you want to do with it?” This brings her back to basics. It’s about finding the answer to what one really wants in life. “You want things that make you feel good and that make you smile. How do you fill your life with balance and harmony?” she says.

The essence of these two elements permeates her design aesthetic, and she believes it’s not something one can necessarily see, but what is felt. “It can be very simple or very elaborate, but it doesn’t have to be ostentatious,” Delgado says. Besides designing private homes, she also manages to get hospitality clients such as the Peninsula Hotel Group, Hong Kong; the Inter-Continental Hotels, New York; or the Rafael Hotel Group, Monaco, not only for her background in hospitality design but for the way she manages to

AT A GLANCE

FAVOURITE PLACE ON EARTH

The Swiss Alps
Japonesque, Zaragoza

DESCRIBE YOUR PERSONAL STYLE

Understated, eclectic, textured, distinctive

PEOPLE

Who's Who

FAACES

see the projects from several points of view; the owners, the managers, the developers and the designers. "Understated elegance and timelessness are always in my design. My hospitality clients are still happy after many years of completion, as their hotel guests often give rave reviews!" she says. Her versatility in design is borne out by the fact that she is often asked by her residential clients to design their second and third homes.

The American furniture designer Dakota Jackson said that Delgado has "a critical eye and impeccable taste." She reveals that potential clients normally shop around for designers and, in the end, hire her as they realise she sees differently from others. "I bring out the persons who live in that house," she says. "I get to know them, how they think and live, and then design the interiors around them. It's about them and not me. A successful house reflects the personality of the client and how they feel 'at home' in their own space. It's a home they care to share with their family and friends. A place where their dreams come alive!"

The gallery represents Delgado's "other" creative side. Unlike women who need a status symbol of something such as a designer It bag, she sees the preciousness in owning unique things nobody else in the world has. "Just bring in what you love because, without a doubt, we will love it too. It's your 'eye' that we want as everything you



covers designed for export can all be found at Anamar. "The Philippines has absolutely stunning materials, products and antiques—I know that people will really appreciate their beauty. It's a very exciting time to create a niche to gain global recognition and acceptance."

As an interior designer in San Francisco, Delgado feels she is limited in finding unique decorative accessories for her clients. As a gallery owner, she wants to unearth one-of-a-kind or limited edition pieces to offer architects, designers, clients and collectors. From her knowledge of her market, she is looking to find artisans in remote villages around the world who can use their skills in creating objects she has helped design. The domino effect of this will help the artisans become sustainable and a positive influence on their younger generations. "If I can surround myself doing what it is I love to do and at the same time help others, why not? This is how I see myself as I move forward into the future, here at my home in San Francisco and back to my roots, the Philippines," she says. ■

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have brought here has been amazing!" says Mark Darley, an international interior and architectural photographer to Delgado.

Several decorative arts sourced from the Philippines such as *tinkop* (tall rice baskets), antique wooden food bowls and instruments, *T'boli* (Muslim brass belt), *tinalak* (hand-woven abaca) throw pillow

EASY ELEGANCE

Delgado wears a white cotton dress by Eairth and a ring, cuff and necklace, all by Joyce Oreña

HAIR: RAYMOND KO OF BENEFITS STYLE SALON FOR L'ORÉAL PROFESSIONNEL