



CORALARIUM

BY JASON DECAIRES TAYLOR

FAIRMONT MALDIVES SIRRU FEN FUSHI

UNDERWATER ART INSTALLATION



WHERE LAND, SEA AND ART COLLIDE

Just steps away from the impressive swimming pool at the Fairmont Maldives Sirru Fen Fushi, discover the Coralarium the world's first semi-submerged tidal art gallery. Set in the centre of the 600-hectare turquoise lagoon that embraces the resort, the unique eco-art creation by renowned underwater naturalist and artist Jason deCaires Taylor exhibits a series of artworks on the waterline and seabed.

The ever-changing museum conceptualized as your portal to the abundant sea life and pristine house reef surrounding our world-class resort, is also the Maldives' first and only coral regeneration project in the form of an underwater art installation. A place of preservation, conservation and education, it aims to connect sea, sky and sand, to you. It also brings in-to focus our delicate relationship with nature.

Using our 200 meter infinity pool at the heart of the island – the longest in the Maldives as the starting point, the idea was to create a direct pathway to the ocean. Guests follow its line into the clear shallow waters of the sea where an underwater coral pavement begins. Sea-scaped with underwater poplar trees and endemic planted corals it heads 100m through the shallows towards the underwater realm, a symbolic pathway to another world and the starting point of the artistic intervention. Here a 50-metre snorkel or swim brings you to a submerged staircase leading up to a semi-submerged tidal building.

Cube-shaped and six-metres tall, the front façade of the building is submerged up to a median tide of three meters. Inspired by natural coral structures its walls are porous to allow the tides, current and marine life to pass through, and let it “breathe” within its location, dissipating oceanic forces and encouraging nature to colonise and seek refuge.

Situated above the water, the entrance of the building leads into a dry elevated viewing platform. Here the cuboid gallery space showcases 14 sculptures on plinths at various heights within the water, some works completely submerged, others high above the water line, with the majority mid water interacting with both the marine and terrestrial world depending on the tidal level.

As one of the world's most celebrated 'underwater naturalists', Taylor's works become

an integral part of the local eco-system, created with non-toxic, marine-grade compounds, free from harmful pollutants. The steel Coralarium structure, first installed in 2018, act as an artificial reef, encouraging local marine life to make it a home. Up to 5 meters tall, each one of the soaring sculptures is constructed of more than 500 ceramic 'starfish' that have been specifically designed to attract a variety of fish and crustaceans – the hard shells catch and hold biomass, or 'fish food', which encourage coral larvae to attach and thrive, while nooks and dark cubbyholes in the structures provide a hiding place for a variety of fish and shellfish.

Currently, it has become inundated with marine life, and adventurous guests eager to discover the thriving underwater world. Hard corals sponges and thousands of schooling fish now live within its walls that are perforated with a coral pattern to allow beams of light to illuminate the sculptures, while a series of submerged lights are installed to illuminate the space during the night.

Those inspired by Taylor's installation can even create their own marine-inspired masterpiece in the on-site art studio, or plant their own coral, which they can see flourish as they revisit in years to come.

Access to the Coralarium is only through guided tours by our resident marine biologists available several times a day.

CORALARIUM FACTS

- World's first semi-submerged art gallery
- Maldives first underwater museum
- 180 tons of architectural elements
- 66 marine grade stainless steel panels
- 432 sqm of laser-cut stainless steel
- 5 meters tall soaring sculptures is constructed of more than 500 ceramic 'starfish'
- 6 fully submerged popular trees seaming coral pathway
- Coral pathway with over 60 coral flower pots growing over 200 cuttings of staghorn coral

ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Jason deCaires Taylor is a sculptor, environmentalist and professional underwater photographer. Born in 1974 to an English father and Guyanese mother, Taylor graduated from the London Institute of Arts in 1998 with a BA Honors in Sculpture.

His permanent site-specific works span several continents and predominately explore submerged and tidal marine environments. His multi-disciplinarily sculptural works explore modern themes of conservation and environmental activism; Over the past 10 years Taylor has created several large-scale underwater "Museums" and "Sculpture Parks", with collections of over 850 life-size public works.

A prolific sculptor, he became the first of a new generation of artists to shift the concepts of the Land art movement into the realm of the marine environment. He gained international notoriety in 2006 with the creation of the world's first underwater sculpture park, situated off the west coast of Grenada in the West Indies. Now listed as one of the Top 25 Wonders of the World by National Geographic the park was instrumental in the government declaring the site a National Marine Protected Area. This was followed in 2009 when he co-founded MUSA (Museo Subacuático de Arte), a vast collection of over 500 of his sculptural works, installed between Cancun and Isla Mujeres in Mexico.

Other major projects include Museo Atlantico (2016), a collection over 300 submerged sculptures and architectural forms in Lanzarote, Spain, the first of its kind in European waters. The Rising Tide (2016 Thames London) and

Ocean Atlas a monumental 60-ton single sculpture located in the Bahamas.

The works are constructed using pH neutral materials to instigate natural growth and the subsequent changes intended to explore the aesthetics of decay, rebirth and metamorphosis. His pioneering public art projects are not only examples of successful marine conservation, but works of art that seek to encourage environmental awareness, instigate social change and lead us to appreciate the breathtaking natural beauty of the underwater world.

He has received numerous sculpture and photography awards and is a member of The Royal Society of Sculptors, Ocean Ambassador to DAN (Divers Alert Network), Ocean Exemplar of The World Ocean Observatory and a featured TED speaker. In 2014 he was awarded The Global Thinker by Foreign Policy, described as the Jacques Cousteau of the Art world.

HOW TO GET HERE

Shaviyani Atoll, North Maldives.

Reachable by scenic seaplane transfer, 55 minutes from Velana

International Airport, alternatively transfers can be arranged via domestic flight to Hanimaadhoo Airport followed by speedboat transfer to the island.

CONTACT US

For more information:

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For more information about the works of underwater naturalist and artist Jason deCaires Taylor, please visit: www.underwatersculpture.com