Canvas is a newly integrated global art affiliate within the HBA family. A comprehensive art consultancy, Canvas focuses on enhancing exceptional hospitality interior designs with well-conceived and fully-realised art collections. From budgeting and concept planning to procurement and installation, Canvas joins under one collective name three consultancies formerly known individually as International Art Collaborative (Atlanta), Art Group International (LA) and HBA Art (Singapore). They are now also complemented by a brand new division in Hong Kong.

At the Four Seasons Guangzhou, Canvas worked with HBA designers to conceptualise an art programme based on the evolution of form and colour across the arc of the seasons, beginning in the lobby through to the building’s peak. In the Sky Lobby, the triple-height space is the base of an atrium which rises more than 30 storeys upwards. Its focal point is a piece by Australian artist Matthew Harding, who created a 3m-tall stainless steel sculpture for this space. This graceful seed-like form is finished in vibrant red, conceived to evoke the spirit of lightness, newness, and renewal of life. The black dais on which it sits is a water feature.

Canvas also collaborated with the client-appointed architects to develop a series of massive screens — each nearly half a football pitch in scale. These screens create a dynamic concertina effect that provides a visual contrast to the interior. The patterns for the screens take their inspiration from rice fields in spring, capturing the first shoots of the season. As the screens progress higher into the hotel, they reflect the maturing rice plant, its harvest and storing the grain for the winter. These intricately designed, faceted and textured screens organically echo the fractal design of the building itself.

The majority of the 1,300 commissioned pieces were created by emerging and established South Chinese artists, including professor and artist Bai Xiao Hua, well known for his simple yet elegant compositions and unique eggshell inlay technique. Canvas directed a series of Bai’s works for the winter-themed executive lounge situated on the 99th floor. In addition, seasonally-themed works by artists Han Ying Ling and Wu Xiao Xun are strategically placed throughout the hotel.

"Four Seasons Hotel Guangzhou was a remarkable project to be involved in. When the consultant and client share a vision of the importance of art to such a degree that nearly every piece can be commissioned specifically for the site, the results are spectacular," de Souza notes.

In the best art programmes, it's not only about the pieces themselves.