



By Ashleigh VanHouten
Photography by Xander Angeles (headshot), Rockwell Group/
Eric Laignel (Nobu), and KennethCobonpue (product)



design in bloom

Kenneth Cobonpue's name may still be unfamiliar (for now), but you've likely seen the furniture designer's work showcased at several Nobu restaurants, the Wynn hotel in Las Vegas, or the Beverly Hills Hotel, to name a few. Despite the number of U.S. projects, Cobonpue works from his native Cebu, Philippines, saying he can't imagine living anywhere else: "It is the only country in Asia that was colonized by both the U.S. and Spain. This blend of three cultures in one place is unique."

His mother Betty, an influential designer in her own right, inspired and taught Cobonpue. "My mother invented a technique of working with rattan that is widely used in the industry today," he explains. "She really was a pioneer in her craft."

While the designer has worked on resorts, spas, and other hospitality spaces around the world, he cites Nobu at Atlantis the Palm in Dubai as one of his most challenging projects. For the brand's largest location, measuring 11,500 square feet, Rockwell Group commissioned Cobonpue to build custom ceiling panels and dividers made out of woven steel and abaca, which had to be shipped in and assembled on site.

Cobonpue is also the creator of Hive, a home accessories and lighting collective comprised mostly of Asian designers; the group launches about 10 new collections per year. "I curate and develop products with designers who believe in the same handmade and sustainable aesthetic as I do," he explains. One of Cobonpue's newer designs—which he says reflects a softer feel than some of this other pieces—is Rapunzel, an indoor/outdoor



Clockwise from top left:
Kenneth Cobonpue;
Nobu restaurant at
Atlantis the Palm
in Dubai; one of
Cobonpue's classic
pieces, the Bloom Club Chair;
and a new series called Rapunzel
that reflects a "softer"
design aesthetic.

furniture series that incorporates thick hand-coiled upholstered foam over a steel frame with seat and back cushions covered in smooth wool.

Working with the group at Hive keeps Cobonpue from getting too comfortable. He says, "I believe that design is a living process, forever transforming in response to the changing world. I design instinctually, according to my taste, which evolves along with what inspires me."

www.kennethcobonpue.com; www.designbyhive.com