

BY CATHY OSMOND

After rebranding it IXL (“I excel”, a none-too-subtle hint at his remarkable self-confidence), he expanded into neighbouring stone warehouses and grew his hugely successful multinational company.

The handsome Henry Jones Art Hotel, opened in 2004 after an inspired refit of the abandoned factory site by architect Robert Morris Nunn, is now well established in the top tier of Tasmanian accommodation alongside its Federal Group stablemates MACq01 (a stone’s throw across Hunter Street) and Saffire Freycinet.

As Australia’s first dedicated art hotel, its credentials are on display in the lobby, halls, guest rooms and dedicated gallery spaces hung with 500 artworks by Tasmanians and/or featuring Tasmania. A guided tour is fascinating, with highlights including Jones’s imposing office, accessed via a grand timber staircase, and the original factory floor, where vintage production-line machinery gives Peacock and Jones restaurant a steampunk aesthetic.

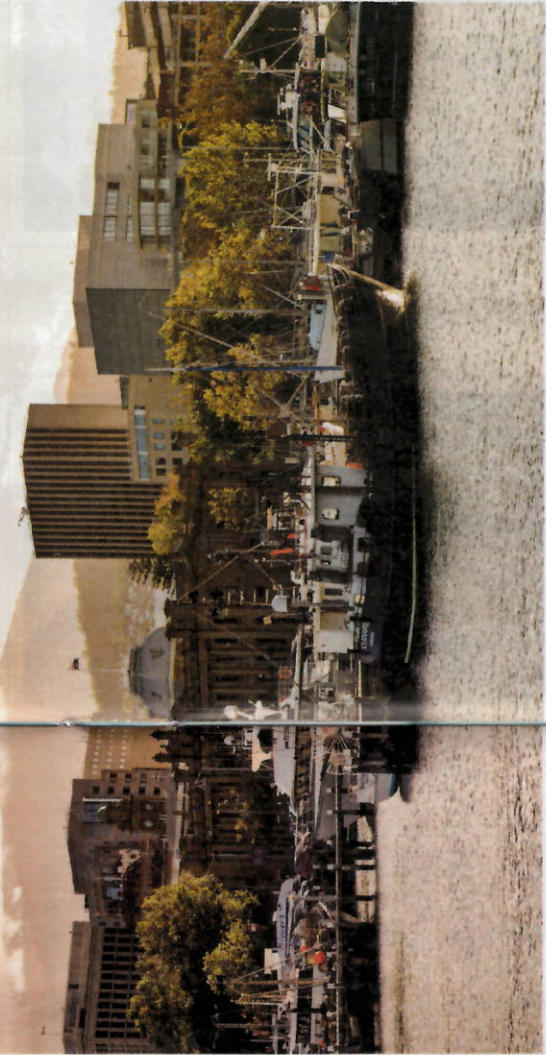
But we are here to see the 2022 winner of the John Glover Art Prize, Australia’s most prestigious landscape art award, and its setting proves the surprising highlight of a weekend of art, food and history.

In Landscape Restaurant & Grill, the heritage quirks, modern flourishes and often edgy art of the rest of the hotel give way to an elegant, low-lit room where gilt-framed Glovers are the star – along with astoundingly good steaks from the Asado grill. A smaller dining room to the rear is hung with Glover Prize winners, among them the latest, Jennifer Riddle’s arresting

Wanderings of the Past and Now, which portrays the oceanic inlet Port Davey in the state’s south-west. In a nod to Glover, the Victorian artist mused: “Perhaps the 19th century

Romantics foresaw where we would be today, as they celebrated nature’s beauty in the face of the Industrial Revolution, pollution and plague. Between lockdowns and border closures, I can’t help but feel akin to [them] as I ardently honour the sublime.”

Following a great-to-sublime dinner under our own personal Glover, grazing on produce from Norfolk Bay (oysters), Stanley (octopus), Cape Grim (sirloin) and more, we retrace our steps through the lobby, past the IXL Long Bar



Heritage: clockwise from right, Jennifer Riddle’s Glover prize-winning painting; hotel entrance; suite; view from the hotel; local seafood at Landscape Restaurant & Grill



swinging with live jazz and up to a first-floor Deluxe Spa Harbour View Room that is a lesson in how to combine historic and modern amenities. At the far end of a long room under exposed rafters, two large windows have views across the harbour to the city and Kunanyi/Mount Wellington; there’s a lounge area, desk, pillowy king bed, all the tech you’d expect – and, like an alien pod landed lightly in all this precious heritage, a freestanding luxury spa bathroom with walls of translucent

glass. On the walls of the suite, pieces of the hotel’s modern art collection. And in the morning, framed by those windows, a sublime vision of the waking harbour worthy of Glover himself: still water, artfully placed fishing boats, the sky a watercolour wash of soft blue, low clouds picked out in pink and gold.

Perfect for: Lovers of art, food and history.

Must do: Take a Henry Jones Art & History tour of the hotel, 4pm daily, and Hidden Hobart walking tour with Master Storyteller Justin Johnstone, leaving from nearby MACq01 hotel (bookings essential). Continue on foot to explore the 19th century streets, cafes, bars and antique shops of Battery Point. Hop on a Red Decker bus to the Cascades Female Factory historic site in South Hobart; it has a new visitor centre (guided tour recommended). Cascade Brewery is nearby.

Dining: Book ahead for a table by a Glover (or Glover Art Prize winner) at fine-diner Landscape, where Tasmanian steak and seafood are king. Peacock and Jones does creative things with Tassie produce – think east coast sea urchin on toasted brioche, Bruny island wallaby tartare or Lyndall Farm lamb with braised witlof. Cocktail hour is at the IXL Long Bar; breakfast in The Lounge looking onto the atrium courtyard.

Getting there: The hotel is in Hunter St, Sullivan Cove, about 20 minutes’ drive from Hobart airport; the Skybus shuttle sets down near the hotel.

Bottom line: Rooms from \$290pn; Deluxe Spa Harbour View Room from \$500; Peacock Terrace \$940.

thehenryjones.com