

The art of hospitality

This Hobart hotel immerses its guests in culture

Few luxury hotels can lay claim to selling more than 140 artworks in one year alone – particularly a Covid year plagued by a lack of tourists. However, Hobart's Henry Jones Art Hotel, due to celebrate its 20th anniversary next year, exhibited 85 artists in 2021-2022 and 47 of them, mainly Tasmanians, had more than 140 of their artworks purchased by hotel guests.

"We are a living gallery," says Henry Jones Art Hotel art curator Tina Zucco, adding that the hotel displays more than 400 artworks throughout its corridors, public spaces and rooms. The artwork prices range from \$200 to \$34,000. "Our ethos is to support Tasmanian artists as much as we can. Our gallery is full until 2025 and we try to have art out here all the time. We sell a lot of art overseas. Just like art galleries we take a percentage of the fee, but we prop up Tasmanian artists.

"Art is not there for decoration, it's not there for a gimmick. It's there on an evolving basis; it's an adjusted collection. That's why our artist in residence program is so popular."

During a visit in late April, as the weather is starting to cool, the upmarket hotel has a smattering of Australian media royalty checking in, as well as a mix of local and American tourists. The reception area displays the winner of this year's Glover Prize, Australia's most prestigious landscape art award. Tasmanian artist Joanna Chew snared \$75,000 in prize money for her oil on linen work *Tender*, which reflects the state's "broken housing market" and references two works by John Glover.

A contemporary of J.M.W. Turner and John Constable, Glover was a successful British painter who moved to Tasmania at the age of 64. He obtained one of the last large land grants on the island, farming and painting commissioned works for the colony's landowners and landscapes for sale in London.

With a glass of Tasmanian bubbles in hand, guests and non-guests alike partake in the hotel's popular daily art tours, which explain the Glover Prize in great detail. The hotel's owner, the Federal Hotel Group, continues to scour Britain for Glover's works. Indeed, not only are the walls of Landscape Restaurant on the ground floor peppered with his paintings, some of which have been brought from the Lake District and recently restored, it also features a healthy smattering of recent Glover prize winners.

These include Victorian artist Jennifer Riddle's *Wanderings of the Past and Now*, which won last year's prize for its depiction of Port Davey's pristine, remote landscape. Diners can gaze upon it as they enjoy octopus, wallaby (if that is to your taste) or steak with charred greens, or lamb, accompanied by matching wines, including NV Arras Blanc de Blancs (north-east Tasmania) to start, 2018 Hubris Chardonnay (Coal River Valley), 2017 Freycinet Cabernet Merlot (east coast), and the delectable 2019 Pressing Matters R139 late harvest riesling (Coal River Valley).

The luxe 56-room hotel on Hobart's waterfront is part of the original IXL Jam Factory, founded by Sir Henry Jones. It was restored from its derelict state by architect Robert Morris-Nunn and opened in 2004. Patrons are typically into history and culture, and most guests of Saffire Freycinet, also owned by the Federal Group, choose to stay at the Henry Jones rather than the more modern MacQ01 Hotel across the road, which is also part of the group. No suite is alike, but standouts are the level-two Peacock Suite, which dates from 1823, and the imposing blackwood-lined H. Jones suite, once the grandiose boardroom of Henry Jones.

The writer was a guest of Henry Jones Art Hotel



Top: The Hunter St facade of the Henry Jones Art Hotel
Centre: Some of the hotel's artwork
Below: IXL Long Bar, right; and a John Glover artwork in the Landscape Restaurant, below

