



Indigenous artist Allan Mansell

IN THE KNOW

Henry Jones Art Hotel hosts the Palawa Connection fortnightly on Saturday mornings; free for hotel guests, \$20 for visitors. Bookings recommended. Prints of Before and After are available for exclusive purchase to Palawa Connection guests.

thehenryjones.com

the art installation suite, he's turning the roller of his printmaking press with a sparkling new spanner. "I forgot to bring the handle for the press," he laughs. "While you were having breakfast, I was off at Bunnings."

For the past hour, Mansell has been guiding us through the creation of his latest artwork, Before and After, but it's been so much more than a demonstration of his art and technique. As he works, the narrative of his life begins to unfold: a hard journey from early years with family on Cape Barren Island; a shattering stolen-generation childhood in a boy's home; his chosen life on Bruny Island.

"I went to Bruny for a surfing holiday 40 years ago, and I'm still on holiday there," he says. From etching the plate to applying the ink and clamping the press, he details the methods and his eco approach to printmaking. Around him, the heavy beams and pillars of the jam-factory-turned-hotel seem almost inked themselves. When Henry Jones opened as a hotel in 2004, a pair of guestrooms stood right here, but on hot days and nights, jam – absorbed into the timber by decades of steam from the cooking vats – would drip from the darkly stained beams.

The setting for this audience feels apt. As we hear from Mansell of the attempts to annihilate the Palawa people in such infamous campaigns as the 19th-century Black Line, to force the original inhabitants onto the Tasman Peninsula, we're metres from where the first European settlers stepped ashore in 1804. Mansell studied a fine arts degree at the School of Creative Arts next door to the hotel, and he spent years employed in an adjoining Parks and Wildlife Service workshop when the hotel was a derelict building.

"We used to get around in here and it was full of apple boxes and apple labels and things like that," he says.

As Mansell turns the press, a print emerges. It depicts familiar Hobart buildings such as the Henry Jones and the tower on Kunanyi/Mt Wellington as ghostly figures interwoven with symbols of the Tasmanian Aboriginal people. Before and After's imagery is in keeping with many of his other works displayed around the suite.

"I was with the original Tasmanian Aboriginal Legal Service for a while as an activist, but it got too political, so I changed tack and I've become a political activist in artwork," he says. "I do this because I need to express what Aboriginality is."

The prints are distinctive, bearing likenesses to mainland Aboriginal art and yet also individual, which Mansell says is a product of Tasmania's history and isolation. "On mainland Australia, we didn't have a written word or numbers, so we used to draw in the sand," he says. "So there'd be a line and probably dots all over the place for things you had to look out for – this rock over here, this big tree over there. Tasmania never had that. We didn't have to travel vast distances, so we didn't have to use that technique of art."

Andrew Bain was a guest of the Henry Jones Art Hotel.

IMPRINTED ON MEMORY

An Indigenous artist is taking hotel patrons on an emotional journey

ANDREW BAIN

Twenty years after opening, Hobart's Henry Jones Art Hotel continues to take its art seriously. With about half of its 500 works selling to guests each year, it has a curator on staff to replenish acquisitions. When Tasmania went into Covid lockdown in 2020, the hotel's food and beverage manager moved into the property to watch over the collection.

It's a hotel where even a walk to your room is like a stroll through a gallery, and dinner at the Landscape restaurant puts you in the company of what's believed to be the largest collection of paintings by John Glover, the so-called father of Australian landscapes.

The property's newest guest experience, Palawa Connection, is another instalment in its commitment to creativity, bringing together the works and the compelling personal story of local Palawa (Tasmanian Aboriginal) printmaker Allan Mansell. His works have sold to collectors around the world and hang in the likes of the state art galleries of NSW and Queensland. This morning, in



JUST ADD ...



ART MOB

Tucked into the Henry Jones Art Hotel, Art Mob hosted Allan Mansell's first exhibition shortly after it opened 20 years ago. Specialising in Aboriginal art from across Australia, it has about 3000 works on show, with a rotating major exhibition along its main wall and other space dedicated to Palawa artists. Look for the collection of maireener shell necklaces, a traditional art of Palawa women. Art Mob is a member of the Indigenous Art Code and the Aboriginal Art Association of Australia. artmob.com.au



TAKARA NIPALUNA

In 1832, a group of Palawa leaders marched on Government House in Hobart to negotiate an end to the devastating Black War between settlers and the Tasmanian Aboriginal people. This 90-minute walk, which is fully accessible, follows in their footsteps through the city, guided by Palawa and Warlpiri woman Nunami Sculthorpe-Green. As Hobart's only Aboriginal-led walking tour, it adds new layers to the known history of the city and its impact on the Palawa. blackledtours.com/takara-nipaluna