

ROOM SERVICE

Through Blackman's looking glass

THE third of the Art Series Hotels, the Blackman, has opened on 452 St Kilda Road. The 207-suite hotel features the art of Charles Blackman, the Sydney-born artist who first met critical acclaim in the 1940s with his *School Girl* and *Alice in Wonderland* series.

Unlike the Olsen and the Cullen, the other two Melbourne hotels in the Art Series group, the Blackman does not feature an original piece of work by the artist it is named after.

Rather, there are more than 400 high-quality reproductions in the rooms, public spaces and two restaurants.

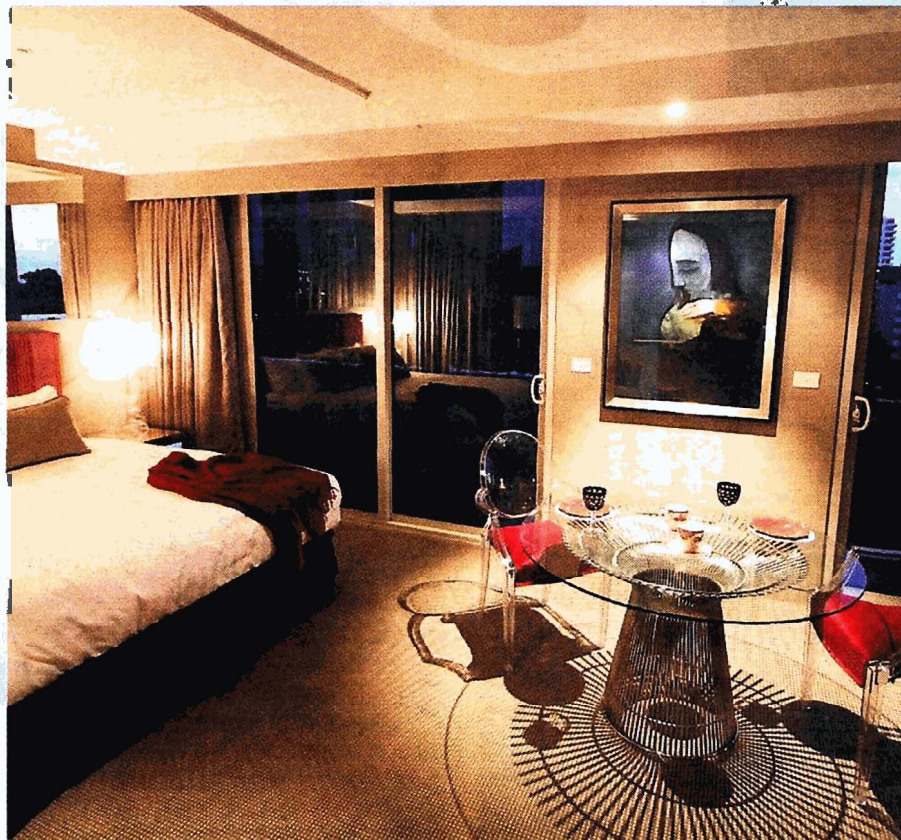
The decor draws upon Blackman's liberal use of intense colour for inspiration and there is a dedicated in-house art channel, while local art curator Jane O'Neill is available to guests wanting to expand their knowledge of Blackman and the Australian art scene in general.

The Blackman's rooms are located in a 16-storey glass building attached to Airlie Mansion, one of the historic homes that established St Kilda Road as one of the grand boulevards of Melbourne.

Rooms cost from \$169 a night. See ArtSeriesHotels.com.au.

Jazzy icon returns

SHANGHAI'S historic Peace Hotel has reopened after a three-year renovation and is receiving favourable reviews. There had been concerns that the iconic hotel might lose much of its historic ambience during the extensive modernisation. However, one review reassures that it is like stepping back in time – and a beautiful time at that.



Wall-to-wall ... the Blackman features more than 400 reproductions of the artist's work.

But more than anything the news that the Peace Hotel Jazz Band has returned to play three-hour sets of traditional jazz nightly has reassured the hotel's fans that some traditions remain in this most modern of cities.

Fairmont Hotels, which manages the Peace Hotel, was determined that the six-man band, which was formed in 1980 and has an average age of 70, would be part of

the hotel's new phase. "It's not all about the walls and the floors," says the hotel's general manager, Kamal Naamani.

Officially opened on August 1, 1929, the hotel was widely known as the "number one mansion in the Far East", because of its location on the Bund and its luxury, including the distinctive copper-sheathed roof 77 metres above ground.

See fairmont.com/peacehotel.

FREQUENT FLYER MADELEINE EASTOE

This ballerina has a taste for vintage frocks and French food.

Q Is most of your travel work or pleasure?

A Most of my travel is work-related (and generally on the pleasurable side). The overseas tours with the company are very special as we're like one big family.

Q What is your favourite city?

A Paris. My husband, Tim Harbour (former Australian Ballet dancer and now choreographer), and I went there after getting married and had an awesome time. I did some research with my dad (a Francophile) beforehand for inspiration, which helped a great deal. I also performed there with the company a few years ago when I was nine weeks pregnant.

Q What do you do when you land in a city?

A In Australia, I try to unpack as much as I can, as quickly as I can, and then go out in search of a supermarket for essentials and maybe a bike hire service. Now with baby Ella it's all about her schedule and what she needs – usually a sleep.

Q What's in your hand luggage?

A I carry a handbag (wallet, keys, mobile, diary, lip gloss) and a backpack (ballet items if on tour, baby bottles, nappies and a good book).

Q Where is home?

A Melbourne, but I originally come from Perth and try to visit whenever I can. Sometimes we tour there with the company, which is a bonus for me and my family.

Q What's one thing you do on every trip?

A I try to find a vintage dress shop or a really good second-hand market. I have an addiction to collecting and wearing 1950s dresses.

Q What's the best meal you've had abroad?

A A great experience in Shanghai at a top French restaurant – we had the degustation menu and it was truly wonderful.

Q You have danced around the world. Where was your most memorable performance?

A I really enjoyed the London-Cardiff tour in 2005 during the summer, performing *Swan Lake* on opening night. The experience was a combination of stress and responsibility and fun getting around London in summer dresses.

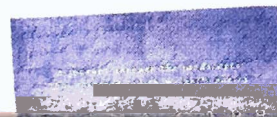
Q What is the best piece of travel advice

ARMCHAIR JOURNEY

My Blood's Country

By Fiona Swan

South of My Days with its glorious evocation of New



Wright family, visits the places she wrote about, reflects on the