



Four of Asian Pacific Building Corporation's proposed hotels: 1 The Whiteley; 2 The Smart; 3 The Larwill; 4 The Olsen

\$500 million worth of "art hotels" for Melbourne and Sydney

Spend the night at The Olsen, The Storrier, The Whiteley, The Quilty or The Larwill...

The Melbourne-based company Asian Pacific Building Corporation recently announced plans to build a series of artist-themed hotels and apartments in Melbourne and Sydney, all due for completion by 2010. The first of these "art hotels", The Storrier, opened in Sydney's Potts Point last year. Formerly a backpacker's lodge, it's now an homage to artist Tim Storrier, with one of his paintings, Point to Point, on display in the foyer and numerous other works dotted throughout the building. And work began in January on the construction of The Olsen, inspired by John Olsen, on Chapel Street in South Yarra, Melbourne. This gleaming 41-level hotel is set to open in October 2009 and includes 220 serviced apartments, a pool and a gym.

Art lover David Deague, CEO of APBC, came up with the idea with his son William and art consultant Ken McGregor. The company's Victorian projects alone are hugely ambitious,

with an anticipated combined cost of more than \$500 million – and that doesn't include the cost of decking out the rooms with artworks. A BP service station in Prahran, Melbourne and a nearby Bob Jane T-Mart will be transformed into The Larwill and The Smart (after David Larwill and Jeffrey Smart) in 2009. A former police station in Hawthorn, Victoria, is earmarked as the Quilty Hotel, after artist Ben Quilty, and The Whiteley in South Yarra – due to open by the end of 2010 – includes 90 apartments plus shops.

"Because of my father, who set up the Deague Family Art Trust, we're friendly with each of the artists, and Wendy Whiteley [Brett's widow] has given us her blessing," says William Deague, Director of A Hotels. "And Wendy wants to be involved in choosing which Whiteley works are hung in the Whiteley development."

The flamboyant younger Deague has a somewhat chequered entrepreneurial history

that includes funding a lavish outback expedition for 10 artists including Olsen, Larwill and Storrier in 2002. In return for Deague's generosity, the artists produced 10 paintings each – a total of 150 works – for the family art foundation and the APBC headquarters building. An exhibition of the works, along with a large glossy coffee-table book – William Creek and Beyond – was later launched at Sydney's Museum of Contemporary Art. Some of these works and others in the Deague Family Art Trust will be displayed in the hotels, and there are plans for each property to sell etchings, lithographs and prints by the respective artists.

On the announcement of the project, John Olsen told the Herald Sun newspaper that he was enthusiastic. "As a young artist I couldn't possibly think of such a thing, and now it seems very appropriate," he said.

www.thestorrier.com.au, www.apbc.com.au



Ai Weiwei's Sherman Foundation work in progress at his Beijing studio

Ai Weiwei at the Sherman Art Foundation

The first exhibition announced

The Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation has announced their inaugural exhibition project – a specially commissioned work by world-renowned Chinese artist and curator Ai Weiwei. Opening on 30 April, the show will coincide with a major survey exhibition of the artist's work, curated by Dr Charles Merewether, at Campbelltown Art Centre, Sydney from 2 May.

The Foundation developed from Sydney's long established and well respected Sherman Galleries, which ceased its commercial operations at the end of last year. It holds a unique place in Australian art as private money is funding a public, not-for-profit contemporary art space. Operating from the former Sherman Galleries space in Paddington, Sydney, the Foundation will hold several exhibitions each year as well as partnering major institutions across Australia.

Ai Weiwei, Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation, Sydney, 30 Apr - 26 Jul