

THE STAY LIST

THE BIG CHILL

Is Canberra cold? Hell, yes, but all the more impressive for the chill.

Ascend the dramatic pick-up-sticks staircase of Hotel Hotel and take up temporary residence beside one of the Ecosmart fireplaces in the lobby. Or in one of 68 guest rooms that favour natural materials and thought-provoking artworks.

Guests plan their time around free bikes, free yoga, a library of design books, free art events (a film on Brutalist architecture in Canberra, perhaps) and surprising pop-ups. They also repair to Monster, the restaurant and bar, which starts early with Ona coffee and house-made crumpets, moves on to yabby jaffles and Mada Pinot Gris for lunch, and ends with share plates for dinner – eight-hour beef short rib or a stew of clams, chorizo and samphire, say. Nightcaps last until one in the morning.

Hotel Hotel occupies the Nishi Building, a gleeful piece of collaborative 21st-century architecture, and home to the eight-screen Palace Electric Cinema, which co-hosts the Scandinavian Film Festival this month. The eateries and bars of New Acton lie just beyond; the capital cultural institutions of the National Museum, the National Portrait Gallery and the National Gallery of Australia are a slightly longer walk away.

The NGA is showing Defying Empire: 3rd National Indigenous Art Triennial this winter, featuring the work of 30 contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists including the remarkable *Thunder Raining Poison* by Yhonnie Scarce. Inspired by the nuclear testing in Maralinga – the clouds of which drifted over Kothaka Country, where Scarce's heritage lies – it's a constellation of 2,000 hand-blown glass yams suspended from the ceiling, which references her people, the earth and the fusing of sand into glass by nuclear testing. It took two weeks to install and is as beautiful as it is thought-provoking. Rooms at Hotel Hotel from \$240; hotel-hotel.com.au; nga.gov.au

FOR ART'S SAKE

From top: a guestroom at Hotel Hotel, Canberra, and (below) the Salon at Monster; Tony Albert's *The Hand You're Dealt* (2016); *Custodian of the Blooms* by Brian Robinson (2014).



CANBERRA



REEF ENCOUNTERS

Opposite: snorkellers swim with a humpback whale and calf in Ningaloo reef.