



THE LARWILL STUDIO MELBOURNE

A stay here might just unleash the artist (or even child) in you. Guests are invited to jump on the beds, draw in sketchbooks or roll a rubber dice to choose the day's activity. Built within the precinct of the Royal Children's Hospital, the hotel pays homage to the late, great David Larwill, one of Australia's leading figurative expressionists. Giclée prints of his naïve paintings are hung on bedroom walls and in public spaces; three originals decorate the multifunctional lobby space, including his signature *Remember Me*. Half of the 96 bedrooms overlook peaceful parklands; the prized corner ones have bonus city views. Everything is playfully art-themed, with 'Artist at Work' and 'Out Feeding the Birds' on door signs for privacy, large paint-brushed room numbers and stacks of art books. Neutral wall colours allow the artworks to sing, and the beds are so comfortable you will want to order one for your own home. There's also an emphasis on wellbeing, with yoga mats in rooms and running maps for exploring, access to Sweat Gym and Lekker bikes for hire. Smartcars are available for discovering Melbourne, while Smith + Singleton restaurant and bar next door has a please-all menu ranging from Reuben and Niçoise sandwiches to oysters, grilled prawns and lamb cutlets. +61 3 9032 9111; artserieshotels.com.au. Doubles from about £55

HOTEL LA SEMILLA MEXICO

Playa del Carmen, with its tequila happy hours and all-inclusive wristbands, is not quite where you'd expect to find this supremely soothing haven, conjured up by Alexis Schärer, a fifth-generation Swiss hotelier, and his Mexican wife, Angie Rodriguez. The pair met while working at the Plaza Athénée hotel in New York, but their dream was to create one of their own, which they did in 2014, just off the quiet, far northern end of Playa del Carmen's buzzy 'Fifth Avenue'. The couple spent a year combing Mexico City's La Lagunilla flea market for furniture and curios, as well as picking up old hacienda finds from around the Yucatán. A little booklet in each bedroom details where the furniture has come from: an old pirate chest discovered in a house in Mérida; a lamp made from a showerhead used in public pools in the mid 1900s. But it's far from style over substance. The couple's hotel background shines through with handmade gifts at nightly turndown (freshly baked cookies; a pretty dreamcatcher fashioned from twigs and shells), the willingness to source a favourite spirit and add it to the bar, or an offer to send clothes out to be washed with the hotel laundry (no charge). Breakfast is served in the lush garden, where Alexis hovers between wicker peacock chairs and wrought-iron tables, dispensing tips for the day alongside the house juice: orange and cactus, spiced with cinnamon and honey. +52 984 147 3234; hotellasequilla.com. Doubles from about £135

PHOTOGRAPHS: MILDRA BENDORAITYTE; SHANNA JONES

