

CLASSIC DRIVER

Swatch Art Peace Hotel Shanghai

The first Swatch Art Peace Hotel was opened today (1 November) in the heart of the historic Chinese city of Shanghai. Not a 'hotel' in the normal sense, the early 20th Century, six-storey building has been transformed into a living space for visiting artists.

Two floors have been converted into 18 living areas with attached workshops for artists from around the world. Every one of the generously proportioned ateliers can be configured to suit each artist's needs. By living and working together in such a luxurious environment, the artists are able to meet and share their experiences and projects, forming a creative community at the Swatch Art Peace Hotel like few others.

The ground floor is dedicated to a stylish retail space showcasing the Swatch Group brands Breguet, Omega, Blancpain and Swatch.





One would possibly expect this sort of project to be found, more usually, in London, Berlin or Paris. Not to mention concerns over artistic freedoms in the People's Republic. Nick Hayek, Chair and CEO of the Swatch Group (and son of the founder), disagrees, stating: "Art is the priceless expression of culture, and the inheritance of a people". With the Peace Hotel, the intention is to secure this inheritance for future generations.

A seven-man committee - that includes Nick Hayek, Nayla Hayek and the American actor, George Clooney - selects which artists should benefit from the Hotel's facilities for periods of up to six months. "We don't want to establish strict rules," said Hayek, "the art must simply please us on an emotional, almost visceral level."



Each artist's area can be decorated and furnished to meet his or her needs. So whether they work in the medium of video, sculpture or painting, each can feel completely at home. The communal meeting places (kitchen or library) serve as much as 'meeting of ideas' areas as they do for a friendly meal or a quiet period of

study among like-minded scholars.

The painter Fritz Burkhard is already two weeks into a 'stay' at the hotel. "I am inspired by the 'tension' created by the close proximity to other artists," he said, and added that "the entire city provides more ideas." The Belgium-domiciled, German-born artist collects roadside advertisements, re-draws them and places them in a different context.





A 'virtual exhibition' of all the artists will be available online at www.swatch-art-peace-hotel.com

And each artist lives 'rent-free'; all he is required to do is leave a small artistic memento of his stay at the Swatch Art Peace Hotel for future generations to enjoy.

Text: [J. Philip Rathgen](#)

Photos: Swatch Group

Gallery

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