The New Eastender

With architecture by Squire & Partners and interiors by Digital Space, art'otel London Hoxton tells a tale of place – of the neighbourhood's recent past, its present and its future.

Words: Harry McKinley
Images: courtesy of art'otel

art'otel Hoxton

Image on previous page:
Lobby lounge, first floor

Below:
Art Room bathroom

Top right:
Bar lounge

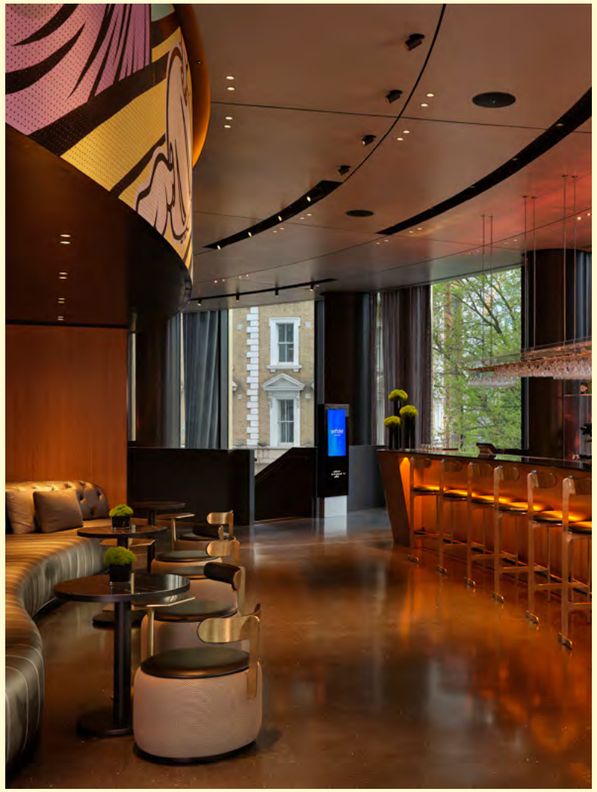
Bottom right:
Art Room guestroom

Just over two decades ago The Guardian newspaper was already pontificating on the so-called demise of Hoxton. 'Popularity has killed personality', it expressed; the artists 'priced out', the hipsters having 'moved on'. This sounding of the death knell feels, in 2024, more than a tad premature. Granted, some of the neighbourhood's more jagged edges have, in recent years, been polished down. But cities evolve, and just as the crime-ridden, faintly squalid Hoxton of the early and mid-80s evolved into a home for alternative culture in the 90s – becoming the ultimate hipster destination – so too has the district now developed into something new. The Hoxton of today is a merging of the high and the low; swish fashion retailers sitting tooth-to-jowl with vintage emporia, independent coffee shops rubbing against familiar sandwich chains and eclectic street art flanked by contemporary construction in glass and steel. Hoxton is still cool, albeit in a different way.

The arrival of various hotels is testament to the area's transformed character, and its ever-growing popularity. The latest, the 357-key art'otel London Hoxton, encapsulates both the past and the present – with its emphasis on urban art and rendering of modern luxury.

Squire & Partners led on the project's architecture, devising a 26-storey building that references Old Street's regeneration and association with technology. It is a new landmark in an otherwise mostly low-rise quarter.

"The cylindrical architectural form and external detail makes a subtle nod to nearby Silicon Roundabout's history in the development of the computer," explains Murray Levinson, partner at Squire & Partners. "It references the cogs and other mechanical components that the very first analogue computers were built with."



The building is wrapped in a collection of bespoke, non-structural 'fins' that represent those stacked cogs – grandest in proportion at street level to afford guests a "sense of arrival", as Levinson details, then serving to create solar shading and privacy between rooms and suites as one ascends, without corrupting the superb views across the capital.

Of course, for the art'otel group a strong artistic narrative is central to any property, and a discovery on the original site would prove a boon for Squire & Partners.

"Two large-scale Banksy artworks were found," says Levinson, "[so these] have been conserved and incorporated into the building design; carefully integrated into the face of the two mixed-use blocks that flank the tower respectively, to form the entrance and exit of the hotel and place the artworks on public display."

Below:
The feature escalators

Centre:
The building's computer-inspired architecture

Right:
The main reception

Inside, the Squire & Partners-devised architecture plays with scale, with ground-level public spaces packaged around a central core. The street-facing bar and restaurant, Brush Grand Café, connects with a lower ground, five-metre-high gallery space and 60-seat screening room; the cavernous main hotel entrance, providing a dramatic welcome for guests, who are ferried to the first floor lobby via feature escalators.

If you're wondering quite how escalators can be framed as a feature, it's here that the work of Digital Space, the studio tasked with interiors, comes to the fore.

"The aim was to provide guests with an immersive artistic journey from the moment they step into the building, until they retire for the night – ensuring that the art is not merely decorative but an integral part of the overall experience," says the studio's lead, Eyal Shoan. This sees three large LED walls serve as 'dynamic canvases' for video work by D*Face – the hotel's 'signature artist', whose illustrative creations are woven throughout.

"Behind the reception area, plexiglass pillars frame another impressive artwork by D*Face, offering a unique perspective from every angle due to the pillars' distinctive shape," continues Shoan.

"Throughout the restaurant and bar on both the ground and first floors [where the reception leads to an all-day bar and lounge], perforated metal curved panels adorned with D*Face's paintings are seen from outside, especially in the evening, becoming part of the street art."

The hotel provides an impressive cluster of flexible, interconnected public and community amenities then. The art gallery is equipped with state-of-the-art video mapping technology and bookable for private events, there's an in-house artists' studio to support emerging talent and, beyond the compelling F&B offer on the lower levels, there's a plush spa with a swimming pool – flanked by illuminated glass walls and with a smart mirrored ceiling. A 25th-floor restaurant is also soon to be revealed, featuring elevated dining both literally and figuratively, and set to benefit from panoramic vistas of Hoxton and the nearby skyscrapers of The City. Expansive conferencing facilities are also hosted on the upper storeys (again with the latest gadgetry), complementing the nearly-complete five-floors that will be dedicated to agile coworking – a nod to the neighbourhood's glut of digital nomads, creative start-ups and mobile tech businesses.

Guestrooms start from the 7th floor, primarily so they can benefit from those desirable views, and D*Face's artwork is once more incorporated, now on a more intimate and human scale – on TV walls, on rugs and even in the shower glass.

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"Hoxton and Shoreditch embody London's creative scene, boasting cutting-edge galleries, vibrant street art, live music venues, trendy bars and eclectic restaurants," says Shoan. "The location within East London's flourishing art scene was pivotal in our design process. Our challenge was to craft a luxurious hotel with high-end finishes that not only stood out for its excellence but also harmonized with the artistic ambience of the neighbourhood."