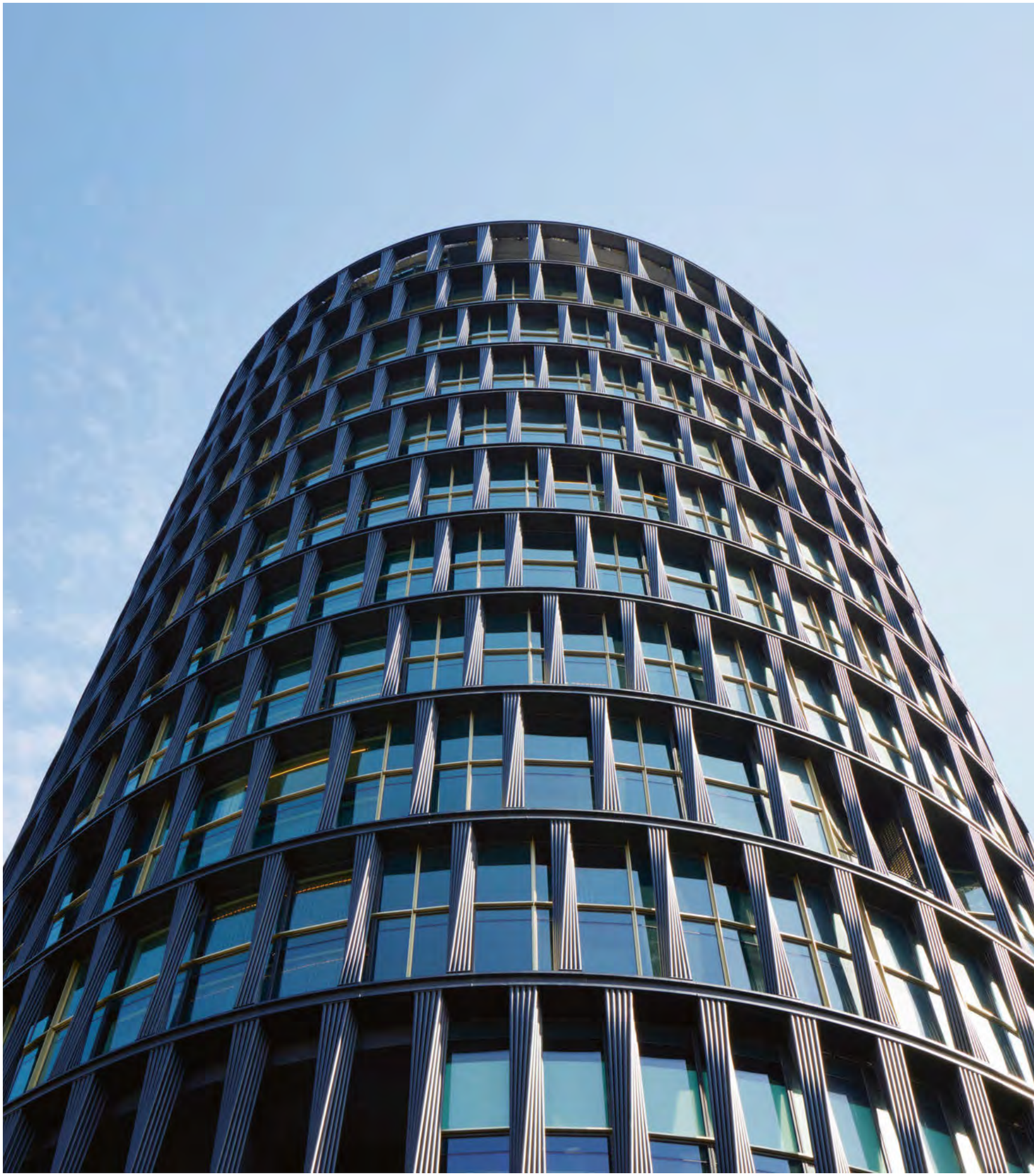
# SLEEPER

HOSPITALITY EXPERIENCE & DESIGN

ONE&ONLY – KÉA ISLAND • SALT HOTELS • THE MANNER – NEW YORK



# Art'otel Hoxton

## LONDON

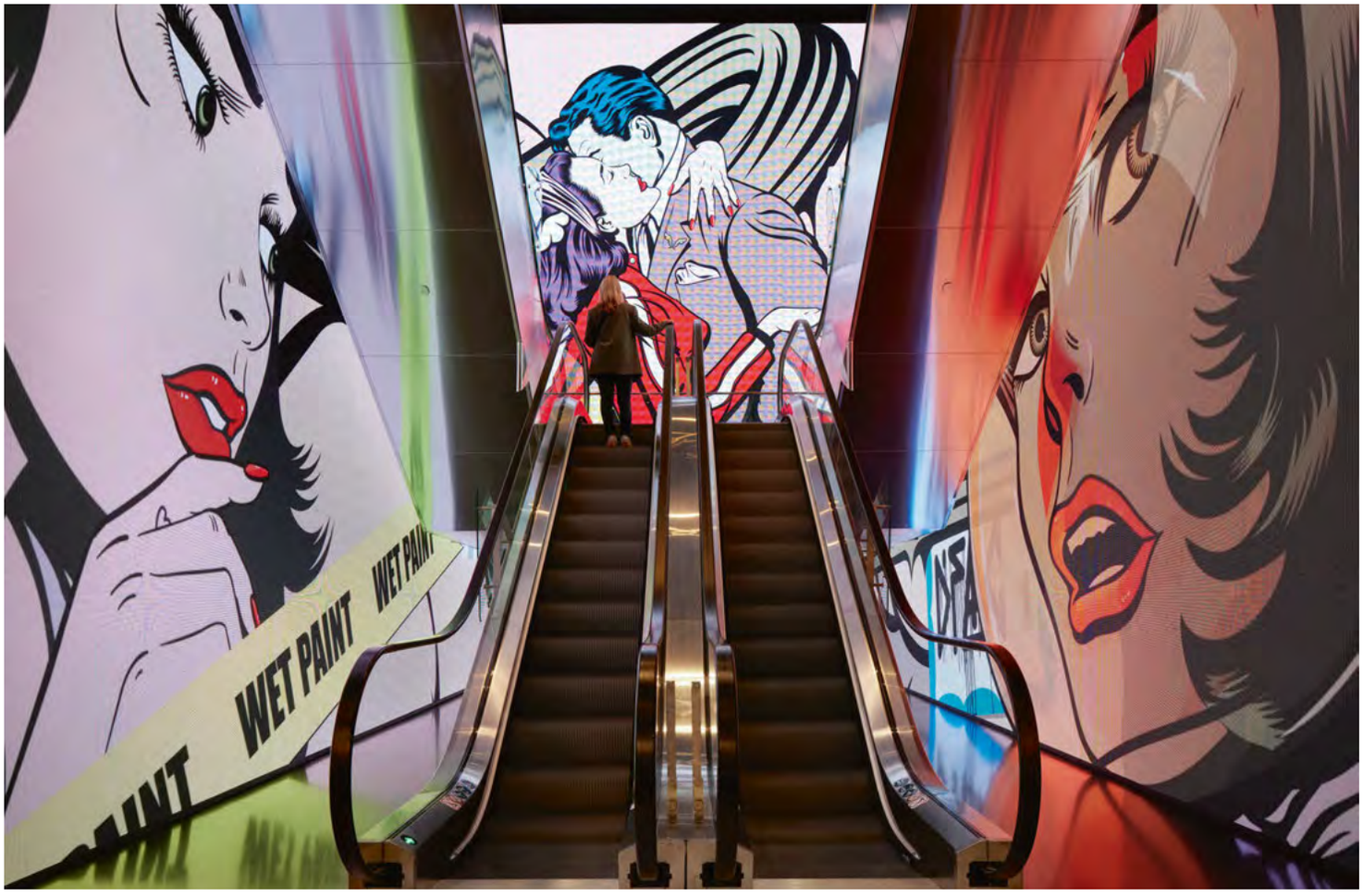
16 years in the making, a new London landmark introduces Art'otel's signature fusion of art, design and hospitality to one of the capital's most creative neighbourhoods.

Words: Eleanor Howard • Photography: © Jack Hobhouse (unless otherwise stated)

There were actually 24 different designs before we landed on this one," reveals Murray Levinson, Partner at Squire & Partners, as we stand at the confluence of London's Old Street and Great Eastern Street, craning our necks to take in the towering cylindrical structure that is Art'otel Hoxton.

As the number of design iterations would suggest, the East London project was a long time coming, but certainly worth the wait. In fact, plans were first submitted to Hackney Council 16 years ago to demolish the Foundry – an iconic gallery and pub that served as a focal point for the area's alternative arts scene – and build a 26-storey hotel in its place, with the opening slated to coincide with the London 2012 Olympic games. However, delays through the planning and construction phases, as well as Covid-related restrictions, meant PPHE Hotel Group was only given the green light in 2019. In the meantime, the lifestyle brand made its UK debut with Art'otel London Battersea Power Station, joining a growing collection of art-inspired hotels across Europe.

Much like its sister property, the design of which was informed by the power station's storied past, the new Shoreditch skyscraper is a direct response to the neighbourhood and its rich cultural context. "It's a landmark site that always warranted something eye-catching," states Levinson. Inspired by Old Street's regeneration and association with technology, being home to a cluster of high-tech companies in the early 2000s, the tower takes the form of an extruded cogwheel. Its façade is divided into bands by horizontal aluminium shelves, each comprising bespoke twisted black aluminium fins that span their height, positioned in a syncopated rhythm around the tower. Each of the building's double-height floorplates is offset to create the illusion of a series of moving components. "The cylindrical architectural form and external detail makes a subtle nod to nearby Silicon Roundabout's history in the development of the computer, referencing the cogs and other mechanical components that the very first analogue computers were built with," he explains.




The foyer is lined with large-scale LED screens that serve as dynamic canvases for an interactive Pop Art display by D*Face

The hotel entrance comprises two mixed-use blocks featuring large-scale vintage Banksy artworks, conserved from the original site and incorporated into the newbuild. "One of the planning requirements was that we kept the two Banksys, so we essentially demolished everything apart from the murals," he explains. "We then sandwiched them between a steel frame and stored them whilst we built the new tower, before reattaching them above the entrance and exit." A calculated risk with such prized pieces, but certainly worthwhile given their value in both monetary terms and the heritage of the site.

Such a statement structure lends itself to the explosion of colours and creativity inside, courtesy of contemporary urban artist D*Face. Dubbed 'the sticker king of London' by none other than Banksy himself, Dean Stockton, or D*Face as he is more commonly known, has spent the past two decades splashing his unmistakeable style across the world, creating murals, hosting exhibitions and embarking on collaborations, before returning to East London where it all began, to oversee the interiors at Art'otel Hoxton.

As the hotel's official signature artist, Stockton has collaborated with interior design studio Digital Space to create everything within from large original sculptures and murals to bespoke fixtures and bold furnishings. "The collaboration with D*Face was exciting – a great creative journey," says lead designer Eyal Shoan. "The client's vision was to infuse the essence of Art'otel Amsterdam – the first hotel we designed for Park Plaza – whilst tailoring it to the specific location and nature of the building. Our challenge was to craft a luxurious hotel with high-end finishes that not only stands out for its excellence, but also harmonises with the artistic ambience of the neighbourhood. We worked together with D*Face and his team to incorporate street art into the building, blending the rough with the luxurious, and the serious with the fun."

Upon entry, guests are immediately wowed by

Smart yet playful, guestrooms feature a pared back base palette offset by bold artworks and furnishings by D*Face

large-scale LED walls that serve as dynamic canvases for an interactive vibrant Pop Art display by D*Face. The screens can also be used to showcase other works during gallery events hosted at the hotel. Moving into the lobby, jet black walls and floors draw attention to the glowing amber reception desk, behind which plexiglass pillars frame another vast artwork that offers a different perspective from every angle.

Following the curves of the rotunda leads to a lounge, where tan leather sofas and houndstooth stools surround a textured metal fireplace to create a cosy niche, while bucket chairs line the floor-to-ceiling windows facing out to bustling city streets. By day, the adjacent Soul & Cocktail Bar is a casual hangout spot, before coming alive at night with an extensive programme of curated events, DJs and live music that carries over the balcony to the ground-floor Brush Grand Café below. Across the double-height space, perforated metal panels adorned with bespoke street art catch the attention of both hotel guests and passers-by.

Moving up through the hotel via Pop Art-inspired lift cars, Squire & Partners has designed the architectural façade to respond to function. "As you rise up the building, the arrangement of the external twisted fins has been carefully adapted to maximise shading and create the appropriate level of privacy," explains Levinson. "Denser spacing on guestroom levels preserves city views, while fewer fins have been used across the top floor entertainment spaces, accompanied by external terraces, to create more continuous panoramas."

Beginning on the seventh floor, the 309 guestrooms and 48 suites are smart yet playful, with floor-to-ceiling windows providing impressive views. A pared-back base palette of darkened timber floors, white walls and lacquered doors is offset by bold D*Face artworks and furnishings, such as Pop Art canvases and Union Jack cushions. The suites come with a lounge, while generous en suites feature spacious vanities, Kevin Murphy amenities and walk-in showers with statement screens. "Guest experience and high-end luxury finishes were key factors in the design of this hotel, as with all our projects," states Shoan. "We aimed to elevate the artwork platforms to the next level; for example, we applied a graphic process to

© Matthew Shaw

the artworks in the bathrooms, creating dotted illuminated glass – a blend of art and luxury."

In the larger suites, separate lounge areas feature Mid-Century chairs and leather sofas, alongside a mixologist kit, handmade games and a Roberts turntable with a rotating vinyl collection that currently includes records from the likes of Amy Winehouse, Fleetwood Mac, Daft Punk and Taylor Swift. Other luxury amenities include espresso machines and Dyson Airwraps, as well as various art-inspired reading materials such as D*Face monographs. Each room also includes sketch paper and watercolour brush pens, inviting guests to create their own masterpieces that will then be displayed in the hotel, allowing them to contribute to the property's artistic legacy.

Crowning the building on the top floors is a skyline gym with spa to follow, and a series of flexible events spaces. Accommodating up to 300 guests, the 10 interconnected Creative Rooms can be hired individually or opened out completely to span the circumference of the tower, making them suitable for a variety of events, from presentations to fashion shows, all set against the cityscape.

A change of pace comes courtesy of the subterranean leisure facilities, which include a sauna, steam room and treatment rooms. The standout however, is the indoor swimming pool, surrounded by floor-to-ceiling mood lighting, a mirrored ceiling and loungers. Rounding out the offer is a 60-seat auditorium and a 135m$^2$ art gallery that will play host to exclusive D*Face pieces and rolling curated exhibitions throughout the year. 5m-high curved white walls serve as the perfect blank canvas for state-of-the-art video-mapping technology to create immersive experiences.

Still to come is a destination restaurant on the 25$^{th}$ floor. While details are still under wraps – there are whispers of a potential star chef partnership – the venue will benefit from outdoor terraces providing 360-degree panoramic views across the capital, solidifying the hotel's status as a new London landmark.

**EXPRESS CHECK-OUT**
**Owner / Developer:** PPHE Hotel Group
**Operator:** Art'otel
**Architecture:** Squire & Partners
**Interior Design:** Digital Space
**Signature Artist:** D*Face
**Main Contractor:** Gear Construction
***www.artotellondonhoxton.com***