

Forbes

Art takes the reins at **Bankside Hotel** in London's South Bank

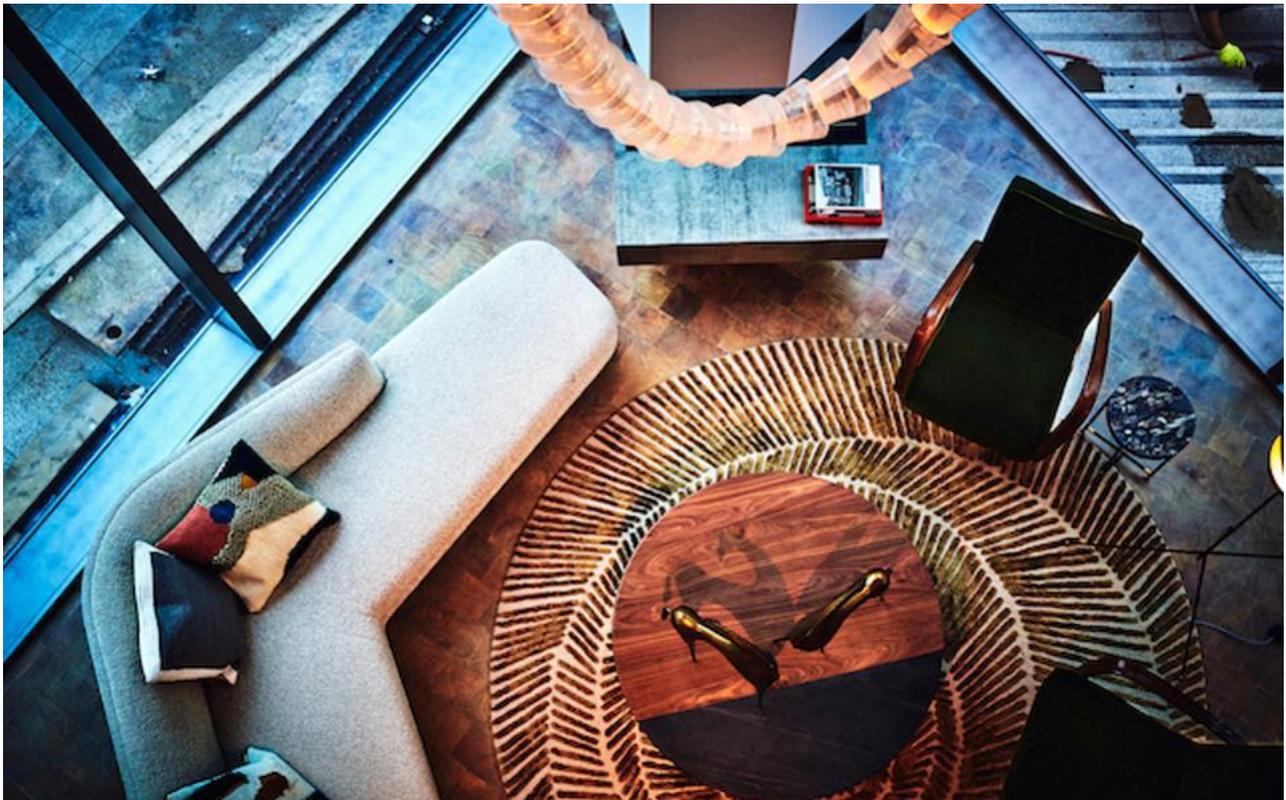


Resident artist Luke Walker in action at Bankside Hotel

BANKSIDE HOTEL

Hotels with artist-in-residence programs have been on the rise in cities around the globe but London leads the pack. While the British capital has a clutch already, the recently opened [Bankside Hotel](#) in the thriving South Bank arts district puts a fresh spin on this trend.

Art is etched into the DNA of this swank 161-room hideaway that opened in 2018 steps from the riverfront. In a six-floor building designed by award-winning architect Ian Simpson, what sets Bankside Hotel apart from the pack is the Maker in Residence program, curated by Contemporary Collective. A rotated cast of emerging artists is selected by the Collective and invited to create at the on-site Makers Space. During their residency (which lasts anywhere from a month to two), the artists also display their work in this space on the hotel's ground floor that opens up onto a communal courtyard. In July, Ernesto Romano showcases his unique work that involves the use of medical records like X-rays or MRIs, exploring what it means to be human. Coming up in August, the Makers Space is hosting Sophie Derrick, whose work focuses on portraiture using painting and photography, blending the boundaries between the two.



Midcentury design take centerstage at Bankside Hotel

CATHERINE GRATWICKE

Art is weaved in throughout the interiors of Bankside Hotel, which were masterminded by Dayna Lee of Los Angeles' Powerstrip Studio, who swapped film sets for hotel interiors. "Art school without the dust" is the guiding principle behind her vision. Lee invited several British makers to

create site-specific works for the hotel, where eclectic midcentury design takes centerstage.

“With the neighborhood's connection to theater and world-acclaimed modern art, I wanted to create spaces that support makers and thinkers,” explains Lee. “I feel strongly that people have a natural sixth sense for their environment beyond the materials to the process of how the special joinery, furnishings and art were made. For that reason, we have taken a keen interest in products made by local hands.”



Bankside Hotel lobby from above

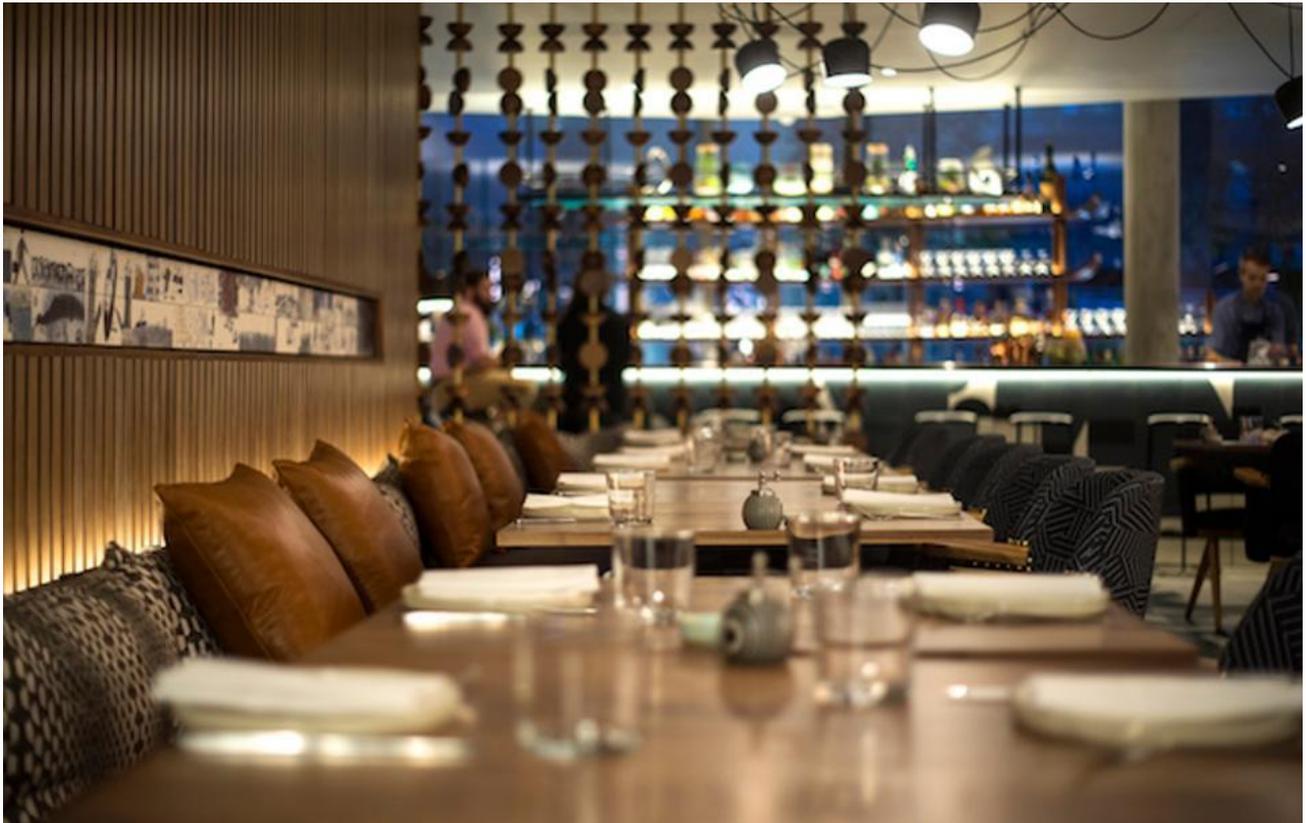
CATHERINE GRATWICKE

London-based ceramicist and illustrator Laura Carlin hand-painted the quirky tiled murals on the walls of Art|Yard bar & kitchen, bringing to life the cultural narratives of South Bank. Malgorzata Bany crafted a series of side tables cast from Jesmonite. Timorous Beasties, an award-winning studio from Glasgow created a textured backdrop that sits behind a leather and metal rocking horse. Handcrafted wooden tables you see in the public spaces were created by Galvin Brothers, a family-owned business based in East Yorkshire.

In the guest rooms, custom pieces of art hang above every bed. In one case, the in-house creative team took iconic architectural images of the Great Arthur

Estate in EC1 and manipulated and enhanced them into original works. Artist Helen Gørill was commissioned to take three iconic people from the past and reimagine them as contemporary local residents. Shakespeare with a skateboard is among the portraits that now hang in the ground-floor hallway.

Creativity reigns supreme at Bankside Hotel, where artists are given a platform for their talent and a space to showcase their work. This creates a new type of guest experience, which extends to the airy guest rooms. Ranging in category and size from Modest Double to Biggest Suite, all the units feature eclectic artwork and hi-tech on a human level. At the all-day Art|Yard bar & kitchen, head Chef Lee Streeton places an inspired spin on classic dishes; à la carte menu includes Goan monkfish curry and wood-fired rump steak with chimichurri. Breakfast is a pretty offbeat affair as well; think minted peas on toasted sourdough with a poached egg.



Art|Yard kitchen and bar at Bankside Hotel
BANKSIDE HOTEL

All this fits perfectly with the surrounding district of London that has long been neglected but is finally coming into its own. The south bank of the Thames has shifted its reputation as an industrial wasteland formerly famed for rowdy theaters and brothels. Now it's a blossoming arts and culture hub, home to

Tate Modern (don't miss the big-ticket exhibit, *Olafur Eliasson: In Real Life*, on through January 5, 2020) and buzzy food markets. Feeding on its inspired vicinity, Bankside Hotel has firmed up the already artsy status of London's South Bank.

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Born and raised in Croatia, educated in the UK and based in New York, I've been writing about travel for 19 years. During this time I have lived, worked and traveled on ...