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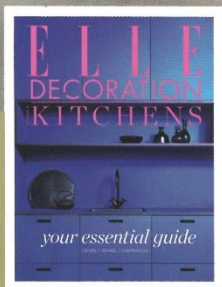
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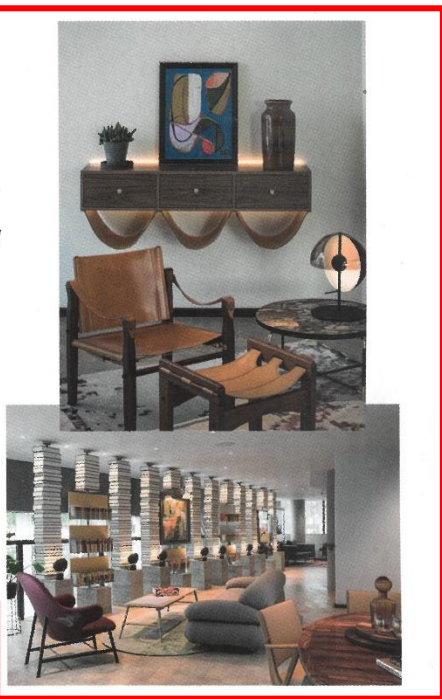
London's South Bank is having a shake-up. New hotels and redesigned bars on the Thames-side stretch are breathing new life into the area

Clockwise from above
Imposing exterior of The Dixon hotel. One of its sleek, modern bedrooms. Art and mid-century-inspired furniture in the Bankside's lobby. The 1970s-influenced interior at Spiritland



Firstly, not one, but two exciting hotels have recently opened their doors: Bankside and The Dixon. The former is arranged across six storeys in a new high-rise on Blackfriars Road, and art is very much its *raison d'être* – a nod to its location in one of the city's most art-focused locales. A permanent gallery space hosts a maker-in-residence programme, while a hand-picked selection of artists' works feature heavily throughout the mid-century influenced interiors (from £290 per night; banksidehotel.com). Meanwhile, at the London Bridge end of the South Bank is

The Dixon. Occupying a Grade II-listed former magistrates court, the new hotel takes its name from the building's architect, John Dixon Butler. Rooms reflect the grandeur of the venue's history, with swathes of marble and herringbone parquet floors. Be sure to pay a visit to its wood-panelled courtroom. Now reinvented as The Courtroom Bar, it's perfect for a pick-me-up (from £199 per night; thedixon.co.uk).



THE SOUTH BANK IS THE PLACE TO BE, WITH NEW HOTELS AND BARS EMBRACING THE AREA'S CULTURAL HERITAGE

A refreshing alternative to the restaurant chains that dominate the South Bank, Royal Festival Hall has unveiled its new all-day dining venue, Spiritland (spiritland.com). Taking its design cue from 1970s talk show sets and iconic sound

studios, the interior mixes theatrical velvet curtains, dark timbers and oxblood leather seating – plus the acoustics are great, naturally. BBC Radio 4 arts presenter John Wilson is curating the venue's cultural programme, which includes a series of talks where guests recount their life through music.

A reshuffle is also afoot at the Sea Containers hotel. Dandelyan, its award-winning cocktail bar, run by mixology star Ryan Chetiyawardana, is undergoing a major refurbishment and is due to reopen this spring with a new name: Lyaness. Chetiyawardana is still at the helm, so we can be certain that it will be serving up innovation in double measures. Watch this space (seacontainerslondon.com).

