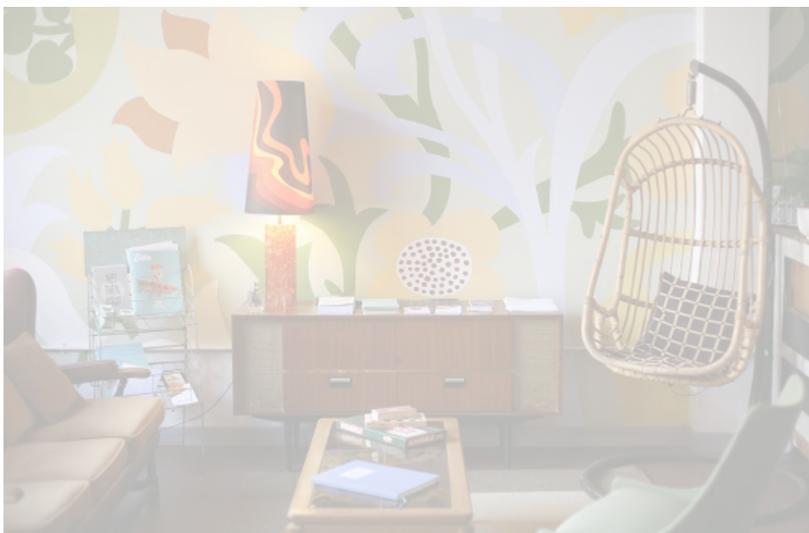


## Art Hostel: An Immersive Experience in the Heart of Leeds

by Kaitlyn Bullen on 22 May 2016

Dreamed up by **East Street Arts**, Leeds' new **Art Hostel** is a bit of an enigma to those not in the know. Is it an exhibition space or real life hostel? Is it exclusively for artists or open to the public? To set the record straight, we paid a visit to the hostel prior to opening, had a nosey round, and chatted to the team. What we found was an exciting and dynamic place to stay for the city's visitors and artists alike, which seeks to make art more about interaction and less about observation. Standing in the regenerated Kirkgate area of the city centre and on Leeds' oldest street, the hostel is as vibrant and exciting as its surroundings. On offer are 8 unique bedrooms, each designed by local and international artists and designers, that seek to provide an immersive experience for guests. This experience is not just provided by the bold décor, but also from the ethos of the hostel, which encourages guests to explore Leeds' thriving independent and creative scene. In the words of ESA, "Art Hostel is leading the way with a brand new concept – a social mission focused on strengthening the local economy through creating new jobs and increasing income to the area, supporting neighbourhood regeneration and pioneering a new model for artists to interact with the wider community – increasing access to the arts by introducing culture via new public terrain". Sounds good to us!



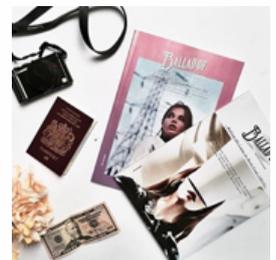
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After opening its doors to guests just a few weeks ago, the hostel has played host to visitors from all corners of the globe. Backpackers from Mexico share dorms with weekend revellers and adventurous solo travellers in one of the dorms or private rooms. Each of the eight rooms were commissioned by East Street Arts after creatives responded to an open call for submissions. Artists **Drew Millward**, **Hannah Stacey**, Silvia Liebig, **Lorna Barrowclough** and **Hondartza Fraga**, along with art collective **Precious** put their stamp on the building, adding pink furry ceilings, 70's furniture, beds made from scaffolding, and a talking Bowie mirror (yeah, really). Throughout the building, there is a sense of excitement and wonder, all created from the playful and inviting designs. The artworks in the building are successful in blurring the lines between art, functionality, and the viewer, and in fostering a welcoming feeling of creativity and freedom for all involved.



The listed building that houses the hostel has a rich and eclectic history, previously as a family owned seed warehouse, retro furniture shop, and vintage clothing store. It has evolved along with the ever-changing city around it, reshaping itself and adapting to the wants and needs of the residents. It is reactionary, and if the current manifestation of the building can be seen as anything, it could be viewed as an expression of the amazing creative, artistic and independent scene that Leeds currently boasts and that the hostel seeks to promote. We can't wait to stay!

Where is the most interesting place you've ever stayed? Let us know on Twitter [@BalladOf](#) or Instagram! [@BalladOfMagazine](#)

Check out the full Art Hostel website over at [www.arthostel.org.uk](http://www.arthostel.org.uk)

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