



**Fostering collaboration in the workplace**  
**A taste of 'Levantine escapism' at new BABA restaurant**  
**Hospitality furniture trends**

# A Taste of 'Levantine Escapism'



© FRANKLIN & FRANKLIN

**Goddard Littlefair has completed a £25m, top-to-toe transformation of The Principal Edinburgh Charlotte Square. The final element of the brief was the design and creation of an exciting new bar and restaurant, BABA.**

**B**ABA is the stunning new destination restaurant and cocktail bar within The Principal Edinburgh Charlotte Square. Offering a boldly unconventional menu of simple, fresh and tasty small plate mezze dining, the restaurant's unique twist is the flavour of 'Levantine escapism', infusing everything from its personality and design to the bold eastern Mediterranean food on offer. Goddard Littlefair was asked to provide a step change in terms of the look and feel of the various spaces which make up the BABA venue.

"To give these hospitality spaces a strong and unique personality, but at the same time ensure they linked well to the rest of the hotel, we incorporated a number of period elements that paid respect to the building, such as Georgian-era tiling designs, as well as architectural salvage elements that linked other key spaces," explains Will Hutchings of Goddard Littlefair.

"We then alluded to the Levantine-



© FRANKLIN & FRANKLIN

influenced food on offer with a series of rugs fitted to the walls like tapestry artworks and via the richness of the colour scheme, which includes aubergine, teal and peacock leather armchairs, with the whole concept overlaid with a bold and contemporary freshness."

The BABA bar has its own street entrance which signals the unique

identity of the space within. A specially-commissioned mural of the 'host', Mr Baba, based on a vintage photograph, provides the backdrop to the bar counter. Elements of this image re-occur within the restaurant and across BABA's brand collateral.

The bar itself has been refurbished with a re-finished, dark-stained, timber bar front and re-used zinc bar top,



replete with the signs of ageing and character from its previous life. A new gantry above the bar counter has been constructed using mesh cages and scaffolding poles to provide storage and contemporary bar stools now allow guests to sit at the bar counter. The bar ceiling is painted in a rich teal tone, with multiple antique framed mirrors attached to it, reflecting the activity beneath.

Guests move from the bar to the restaurant via a glazed platform which allows views over the space before stepping down into it. At the base of the steps is the restaurant's show kitchen and dining counter. This is the first of a series of dining spaces, also including The Map Room, The Salon and The Library, each with a different emphasis, in addition to the main restaurant space.

The main area features a vibrant colour scheme and an industrial, distressed design feel, with strong elements of the Levantine in terms of colours and detailing. An arresting palette of deep teals and sea-green is used for the walls and ceilings, on top of which, specialist paint finishes have been applied by artist Diane Hill to evoke the passing of time and hint at the building's age



and materiality. The deep red, terracotta and sea-green tiling adds a sense of glamour and excitement to the space. A chequerboard pattern, stencilled onto the floorboards, will wear with time and increase the scheme's feel of worn authenticity.

In the centre of the space, a row of banquettes has moveable divider screens so that the seating can be set up in variables of groups of ten. The screen sliders use hardware originally created

for barn doors and are set on rollers with timber frames and panels covered in red leather. The framework for the banquettes was created using reclaimed timber boards, surplus to requirements in the hotel's third floor bedrooms, with decorative inset panels formed from interwoven strips of elasticated webbing, more traditionally used for the construction of chairs.

"These are an excellent example of the resourceful upcycling we looked to



© GARETH GARDNER



© GARETH GARDNER



© GARETH GARDNER

incorporate wherever possible in the scheme,” comments Goddard Littlefair Creative Director, Richard McCready-Hughes.

Striking feature lighting includes five sets of bespoke, hand-forged lights with metal chandelier casings by Made by the Forge, as well as twenty pendant lights made up of fret strings along the inner and window sides of the restaurant and bar, by Danish designer Alexandra Raben. There are three more lights by the same designer along the restaurant’s back section and one super-sized one

in burnt orange over the ‘snug’ seating area.

The Map Room, Salon and Library are individual ‘roomset’ spaces, semi-separated from the main restaurant. They function as private dining areas. The rooms are bold and colourful with certain shared design treatments, including white ceilings, stained timber floors and peacock blue walls and shelving. The overall feel is ‘luxurious clubhouse’, featuring softer fabrics, such as velvets, rather than the leather used for the main restaurant furniture, where there is more

need for high-usage robustness. The Map Room and The Salon are side-by-side and face The Library and Dispense Bar. The corridor between that leads to some of the hotel’s bedrooms in the ‘old block’ section. Curtains are used to ensure a feeling of separateness from this through-traffic. The curtains are in hessian with a charcoal velvet leading edge, adding texture and countering the rich materials used elsewhere.

**To find out more about Goddard Littlefair, visit [www.goddardlittlefair.com](http://www.goddardlittlefair.com)**