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THE PRINCIPAL EDINBURGH CHARLOTTE SQUARE, EDINBURGH

Goddard Littlefair were in the driving seat for the top-to-toe transformation of The Principal Edinburgh Charlotte Square, which was fully completed in December. Features Editor Tonje examines the new look.

As with all of Principal's properties, there is a history and a story that is endeavoured to be preserved by both designers and architects. Simultaneously, there is a clear effort to represent the locale of the property in the interiors. The Principal Edinburgh Charlotte Square is no different – the Grade II-listed building has previously hosted two former hotels, so hospitality is certainly in its DNA. Originally designed by Robert Adam in the 18th century, the building is made up of seven traditional

Georgian townhouses.

In charge of the £25 million revamp that saw a complete transformation of all of the hotel's public spaces and guestrooms, were architects 3DReid and interior designers Goddard Littlefair.

Jo Littlefair, Director and Co-Founder of Goddard Littlefair, said: "Like a cosmopolitan clubhouse the scheme for the hotel is eclectic, intriguing and full of references to travel. The interior feel is plush and elegant, with interesting and varied furniture and tactile, high-quality fabrics."

PUBLIC SPACES

Entering the hotel you come into the grand lobby with a spacious, glazed vestibule. Clad in a striking white marble and herringbone mosaic floor, which cedes to an ebony timber parquet floor, guests are led through into the lobby through heavy glazed timber and bronze doors, where you're met with a stunning customised pendant light.

Maintaining the narrative of travel, the lobby is decorated with antique furniture, hat-stands, vintage walking sticks and suitcases, which also add a residential feel. The original fireplace further enhances this ambience, alongside cosy mustard-coloured





Photos: Gareth Gardner and Franklin + Franklin (BABA)

SPACES

lounge chairs and bespoke lamps.

Instead of a traditional concierge station, the reception area has been reconfigured to feature a series of smaller welcome stations, clad in aged black timber frames, black marble tops and woven leather front-inset panels with antique bronze detailing.

'The Garden' is definitively the heart of the hotel and is visible from the moment you step into the hotel. A space previously used for pre-functions, it has been transformed to have a striking glazed glass roof. The light-filled space will be used as an all-day drinking and dining venue, buzzing with life and spirit, something that is represented in the lively colour palette and use of colourful patterns and fabrics.

The design for the space comes from great hothouses, orangeries and nurseries of grand, historic country estates. Art Nouveau peacock chairs and a fabric palette of vibrant greens and yellows perfectly match the overwhelming use of plants – trees, hanging baskets, pods and vines. The garden theme is continued by the presence of ladders laid across the roof transoms, paint-dipped wicker lampshades, antique chandeliers and the occasional watering can.

The floor is covered with two types of ceramic tiles, both made to resemble distressed/aged concrete with subtle, word patterns, with the occasional introduction of timber. The bar area features a riveted zinc counter, overhanging pergola and vines, and its own water fountain.

An eclectic approach has been taken to the furnishings to create a mix-and-match style and features a combination of painted wrought iron, wicker, timber, and woven rattan chairs. The tables are in a variation of finishes including reclaimed timber and stone.

In the evening, the space is transformed into a magical hub, brought to life by the perfect, ambient lighting scheme made up of periphery wall lights and wicker shades that throw playful patterns across the walls and the floor. Pretty glass jar lights with metal floral fittings, multiple string festoon lighting and antiqued metal chandeliers all add to the garden-party vibe. Especially noticeable are the over-scaled drum lampshades that hang around the edges of the room.

Richard McCready-Hughes, Creative Director of Goddard Littlefair, said: "We cast the net wide when it came to searching for the right accessories to dress the space with and add personality." This meant several trips to antique markets and dealer fairs.

DRINKING AND DINING

In addition to The Garden, there is an exciting new restaurant concept at The Principal Edinburgh Charlotte Square, which was the last element to be completed. BABA, Edinburgh's new destination restaurant and cocktail bar, is led by Jonathan MacDonald and Daniel Spurr in partnership with restaurant and bar visionaries Robbie Bargh from the Gorgeous Group and Kathrine Arnold.





Will Hutchings of Goddard Littlefair, explained the vision behind the design concept: "We alluded to the Levantine-influenced food 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."

Georgian-era tiling design as well as architectural salvage elements give the space its own character, and a custom-made mural of the 'host', Mr Baba, provides the backdrop to the bar. The bar itself has been refurbished with a re-finished, dark-stained timber bar front and re-used zinc counter. The bar ceiling is painted in a rich teal tone, with multiple antique framed

mirrors attached to it, reflecting the activity beneath. The row of reclaimed cinema seats is a nice touch that add a unique and retro feel to the place.

Moving through to the restaurant via glazed doors, you can see the show kitchen and dining counter in the main area that features a vibrant colour scheme and an industrial, distressed design feel. Deep teals and sea green cover the walls and the extensive use of mirroring reflects the richly patterned, Middle Eastern, wall-hung rugs, as well as the deep red, terracotta and sea-green tiling. The screen sliders use hardware originally created for barn doors and are set on rollers with timber frames and panels covered in red leather. Several other salvage elements have been used, including furniture, doors and decorations.



ACCOMMODATION

The hotel offers a total of 199 rooms, including 18 suites, spread across three locations: the old block, the new wing and the 'wee house'. Of the nearly 200 rooms, which were completed already in August last year, no two rooms are the same, as the designers have aimed for ultimate uniqueness. The design has also been focused around comfort, colour and character with a fun and eclectic art.

The rooms in the old block make the most of period details. Tradition meets youthful modernism in these rooms, with beautiful grey dogtooth carpets. Upholstered headboards, freestanding items of cabinetry and deconstructed wing chairs provide a distinctly residential feel. The bathrooms in this block are contemporary with high-quality sanitary ware and bespoke lighting and mirrors.

The guestrooms in the new wing are more uniform in layout, but carry the same character of uniqueness as the rooms in the more historic areas of the hotel. Herringbone flooring with bespoke carpets perfectly attribute the caramel-coloured leather Chesterfield sofas. Bathrooms are traditional with floor tiles in a soft, grey timber-textured ceramic, while tiles in dark mink line the walls of the generously spaced walk-in showers.

'The Wee House', which is like a mini hotel within the hotel spread over four floors, contains bedrooms that resemble each other in style and feel, but each have unique bathroom designs; roll-top baths, marble washstands and tiles, Victorian, chequerboard floor tiling in herringbone, and timber skirting with a dado rail.

ARCHITECTS: 3DReid

INTERIORS: Goddard Littlefair

DEVELOPER: PRINCIPAL Hotels

SUPPLIERS: *Furniture:* Thomas Johnstone, OZO/Living Area, Ercol, &tradition, Display Hardware, Andy Thornton, Restoration Hardware, OKA, KOK Maison, Sika, Sol & Luna, Taylors Classics, The Contract Chair Co, La Maison Chic, Reclaimed Bespoke, Chehoma

Lighting: Heathfield Lighting, Susan Lake Lighting Design, A Shade Above, Tissus d'Hélène, Graypants, Made by the Forge, Alexandra Raben, Janie Knitted Textiles

Soft furnishings: Osborne Heath, Tinek Home

Signage: Rivermeade *Flooring:* Thomas Johnstone, Brintons, Newhey, Karndean, Fired Earth

Art: Artiq *Fabrics:* Janie Knitted Textiles, Pyton, Janus et Cie, House of Hackney *Landscaping:* Bright Green, Fleurutations

Bathroom fittings: St James *Wallcoverings:* Timorous Beasties

phcompany.com/principal/edinburgh-charlotte-square