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**Inspiring Hospitality Design**





# The Principal Edinburgh Charlotte Square

**W**hat Principal Hotels are particularly good at is making their new city hotels feel like they have been a part of the fabric of the area for a long time. Credit for this is largely due to their choice of buildings but the designers play a not insignificant part in the process. In this instance, at the Grade II\* - listed The Principal Edinburgh Charlotte Square, designers **Goddard Littlefair** have respectfully reinterpreted the property's Townhouse origins to the front; including the lobby, reception and lounges, but have added degrees of modernity to the heart of the hotel that will surprise guests. Namely a beautifully inspired courtyard 'Garden' space and a new bar and restaurant, known as BABA.

The property had long been a hotel, previously trading as The Roxburghe and before that as the Crowne Plaza Edinburgh. It is made up of seven classic Georgian townhouses, originally designed by leading 18<sup>th</sup> century architect Robert Adam. >







**The Principal Edinburgh  
Charlotte Square**







Guests enter the hotel via a classic original arched entranceway, refurbished with a smart, black-painted door set into a white-painted, glazed arch. The sense of being welcomed into a grand old Georgian townhouse prevails. Once inside, a spacious, glazed vestibule provides an area to wait or lounge in, with, to the right, an antique bench and bent-wood hat-stand and multiple hooks for hats and bags. Vintage walking sticks, hats, bags and suitcases immediately de-formalise the space and reinforce the subliminal sense of entering a private residence.

**Will Hutchings**, Senior Designer at Goddard Littlefair explains. "To underline the sense of arriving at a hotel that communicates an instantly relaxed, pre-established feel, we chose to include a few great vintage items in the scheme, with newer items often finished with an antique look or treatment, such as deliberately worn wood, so that the furnishings tell a unified story".

The art around the seating area opposite the reception desks is a case in point. Curated by leading art consultants **ARTIQ**, a broad range of prints and original art suggests the collection of a well-travelled individual who has returned home to Edinburgh after many years away and relays, through a vintage lens, a narrative about global travel and Edinburgh itself. The lobby area features a 'salon hang' treatment, made up of vintage etchings, 18<sup>th</sup> century political illustration, original abstract paintings and drawings, contemporary prints and sketches. Frames are also a deliberately eclectic mix, from slim contemporary mouldings and roughened wood to genuine vintage gilt and carved frames.

A strong visual axis has been created to ensure that the new 'Garden' space is immediately visible from the moment you enter the hotel. Located in a space previously used for pre-function drinks or as a breakout area, The Garden serves as a destination all-day food and beverage space creating an





## The Principal Edinburgh Charlotte Square



oasis for local Edinburgh residents, as well as hosting breakfast service for hotel guests.

Originally open to the elements, the central courtyard space has now been reclaimed as part of the hotel's interior space with the addition of a new glazed roof. The light-filled space provides the hotel with a much-needed heart and allows comfortable all-year-round usage. The introduction of timber-clad columns and surrounding bulkhead both encloses and compartmentalises the space, providing a few intimate nooks and cosy corners. Cantilevered mirrors have been added to the bulkhead to maximise the sense of light and space and to encourage glimpsed views and people-watching. The design for the space was inspired by the great hothouses, orangeries and nurseries of grand, historic country estates.

A bar area features a riveted zinc counter, overhanging pergola and vines and provides a

visual focus at one end of the space, enlivened by sounds from its own water fountain. In the evening, the space takes on a magical feel, thanks to the ambient lighting scheme, which includes periphery walls lights, with an intimate, candle-lit feel, whilst the extensive use of wicker shades reinforces the sense of being in an indoor-outdoor space and casts playful patterns across the walls and floor. Pretty glass-jar lights with metal floral fittings, multiple-string 'festoon' lighting and antiqued metal chandeliers all add to a garden-party vibe.

BABA, the new restaurant and cocktail bar, offers a boldly unconventional menu of simple, fresh, tasty small plate mezze dining and the restaurant's unique twist is the flavour of 'Levantine escapism', infusing everything from its personality and design to the bold eastern Mediterranean mezze food offer. Goddard Littlefair was asked to provide a step change in terms of the look and feel of these spaces and this change in approach is immediately apparent. '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 several 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. 'We then alluded to the Levantine-influenced food offer with, for example, 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.'

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, which 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.

No two bedrooms are the same in this collection of 199 rooms, which includes 18 suites. The bedrooms are spread across three locations – the old block; the new wing and the





'wee hoose'. The design treatment for all centres on comfort, colour and character, with fun and eclectic 'salon hang' artwork in each room, for example, ranging from the contemporary and abstract to cultural illustrations and highland animals, treated with a touch of irreverent wit. Art consultancy ARTIQ also sourced accessories for the rooms, from cocktail shakers to small succulents. For the corridors, vintage drink and advertising posters sit alongside animal prints and maps.

The old block guestrooms make the most of period details, such as refurbished listed detailing and cornicing. The overall design treatment is a balance between tradition and a more youthful, contemporary feel. Carpeting throughout is a white and grey dogtooth design from **Newhey**. The beds feature upholstered headboards, with saddlery and buckle details in a deep blue/grey leather, plus freestanding items of cabinetry finished in a combination of deep ebony and soft, contemporary grey stained oak. Deliberately de-constructed wing chairs feature in some rooms, where exposed rear framing and webbing adds to the authentic,

established, residential feel. The cabinetry carries details from trunks and suitcases from the golden age of travel and exploration, whilst tweeds, tartans and velvets provide warmth and a sense of place. The bathrooms in this block feature a contemporary treatment with high-quality sanitary-ware, bespoke lighting and mirrors.

The old block linking corridors are painted in a green-grey tone, with pools of light outside each guest room.

All the bespoke freestanding furniture and guestroom lighting were designed in-house by Goddard Littlefair and produced by **Thomas Johnstone**, **Ozo/Living Area** and **Heathfield Lighting** respectively. The 'wee hoose', which is like a mini hotel-within-a-hotel spread over four storeys, has bedrooms with a similar feel, but with a unique bathroom treatment, featuring roll-top baths, marble washstands and tiles, as well as Victorian-style, chequerboard floor tiling in a herringbone pattern from **Fired Earth**, along with timber skirting and a dado rail. By respecting the key elements of the original property, the designers have done

an exceptional job. This part of Edinburgh is a delight to visit. The buildings have been beautifully preserved externally; they have an ageless quality and a great sense of period. But on the inside, they have been allowed to evolve to provide modern day comforts. And hotels don't come with much more comfort than this.

The Principal Edinburgh, Charlotte Square, is typical of the brand. Principal is a growing collection of city-centre hotels based in exceptional locations across the United Kingdom. The distinctive heritage and resulting relationship between the properties and their surroundings are the cornerstones of the brand. It was hoped that in this issue we would also be able to review the new Principal London, based in Russell Square. Unfortunately, at the time of writing, some parts of the hotel are still not finished so we must wait until they're ready for a photo shoot. From what we've managed to see so far, it'll certainly be worth the wait.

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