

SUPPER

HOTEL FOOD & DRINK



Cultureplex Native

MANCHESTER

The restaurateurs behind Bistrottheque and Hoi Polloi celebrate Manchester's industrial heritage and cultural pedigree with their latest outpost.

Words: Jenna Campbell • Photography: © Felix Mooneeram

Sitting on the edge of Manchester's Northern Quarter, the newly restored Ducie Street Warehouse – a Grade II-listed building formerly used to store cotton bales, a vital product during the Industrial Revolution – has been given a new lease of life as serviced apartments and a thriving cultural hub.

The capacious building, spanning eight floors and boasting a triple-height ground floor alongside 166 beautifully designed suites, is brought to Manchester by apart-hoteliars Native in collaboration with London restaurateurs David Waddington and Pablo Flack. The duo behind Ace Hotel London Shoreditch hangout Hoi Polloi and Bethnal Green institution Bistrottheque have been tasked with creating a ground-floor destination space for visitors and locals alike to experience, inhabit and breathe new life into.

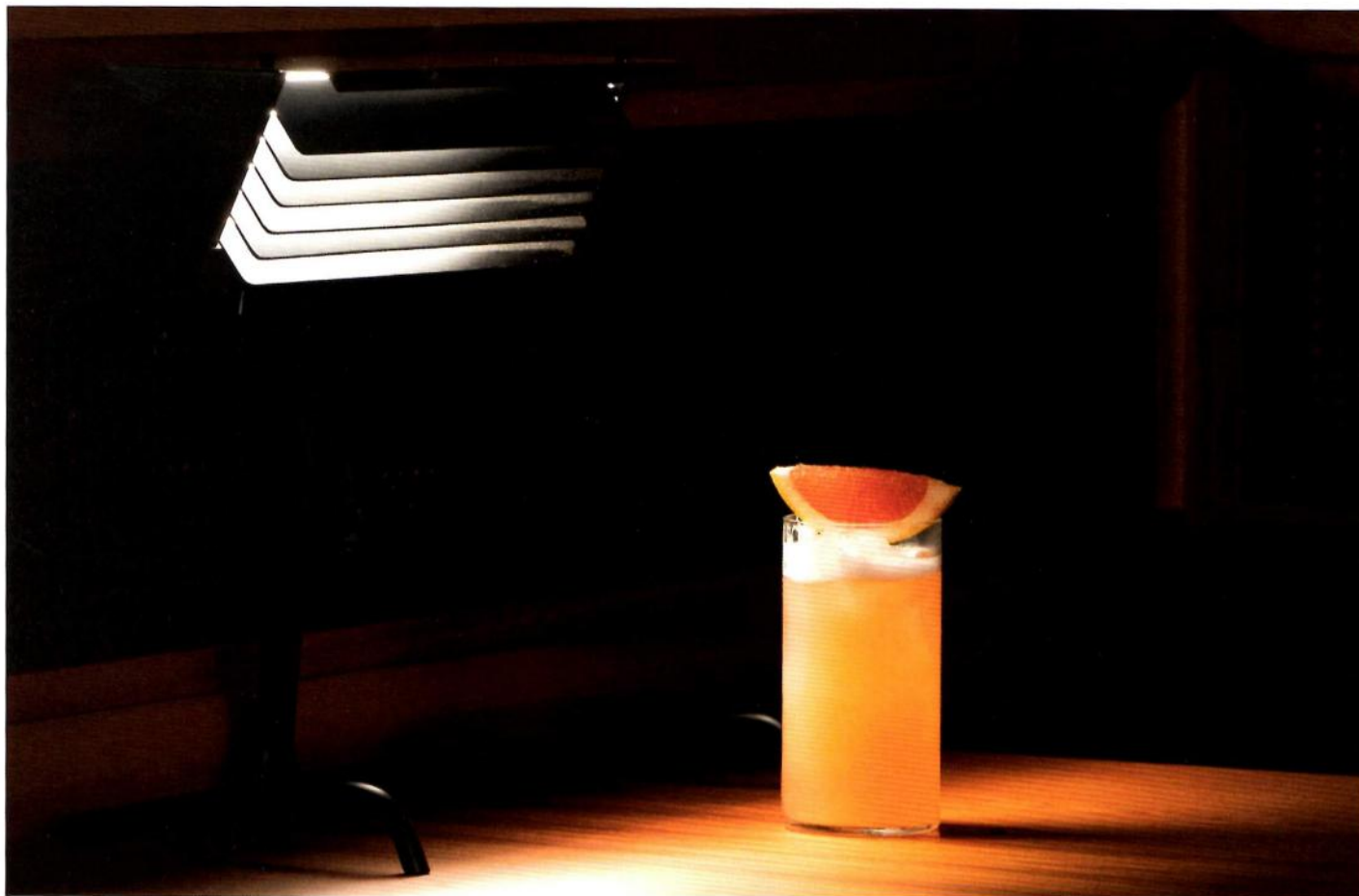
Spearheaded by Waddington and Flack, the hotel's F&B offering, Cultureplex, features an all-day lounge and bar built for casual dining and co-working; an artisanal coffee counter, Klatch, serving 'healthy(ish)' food and juices by day, and natural wines and craft beers by night;

and an 80-cover restaurant, Bistrottheque, specialising in uncomplicated dishes with a distinctively northern twist. The team's ambitious regeneration plans also extend to a mini-cinema showcasing a curated selection of art-house films; meeting and event spaces with sunken garden features; outdoor terraces; and luxury gym BLOC.

"Culturally, Manchester is amazing, it punches well above its weight in terms of size and population," says Waddington. Having identified the growth of the city's independent hospitality scene, especially in neighbouring Ancoats – where Michelin-starred Mana, Pollen Bakery and seasonal kitchen Erst are each housed in former cotton mills – the pair saw the potential of Ducie Street Warehouse to build upon these culinary foundations and bring something new to the city. With both founders originally hailing from Yorkshire, the project also represents a homecoming of sorts, a chance to reconnect to a place where they both spent a lot of their youth.

A full 25 years after meeting in London, and with a successful portfolio of restaurant





ventures behind them – including a string of temporary concepts such as Studio East Dining and Kings Cross Filling Station – their northern venture has been meticulously considered, with a concept that responds specifically to the nature of the building itself. While the ground floor serves as a public space for the aparthotel above, run independently, they “try not to think about the upstairs at all,” notes Flack. Conscious that the F&B offering and all the cultural adages should reflect local appetites and not just hotel guests’ expectations, they have evolved the function of the traditional lobby space into something akin to a community hall.

Seeking to respect the rich industrial underpinnings and original features of the listed building, they called upon Loren Daye, founder of New York design studio Love is Enough, to bring a human scale to the space in a style reminiscent of the Hoi Polloi aesthetic which she worked on previously. Restored by Archer Humphryes Architects, a robust structure of vaulted ceilings, exposed barrel arched brickwork and hefty cast-iron columns remain intact, softened by features including glazed Douglas fir wooden panels and

caramel leather seating. “There’s often a tendency to make grand statements and big splashes, whereas we have created something that feels more harmonious with the building and doesn’t shout too loudly,” notes Waddington, citing Manchester’s John Rylands Library and public halls – signposts of community and democracy – as a source of inspiration.

Elsewhere, the muted colour palettes and many plants dotted around the space are complemented by locally sourced fixtures and apparel. Black tile floors leading out on to the Piccadilly canal basin beyond – a seamless continuation of the building’s existing terracotta features – are made in Stoke, while the serene powder blue of the Klatch counter has been created by Darwen and Faience. In a nod to the city’s past, meanwhile, the space includes Granby Workshop terrazzo in the lounge and restaurant, constituted of remnants from the region’s demolished buildings, a reminder of how sensitive design techniques have been woven into the building’s fabric.

This thoughtful approach, coupled with a strong conviction that the space should provide a number of cultural touchpoints, is mirrored by a distinctly

**IN A BITE**

Covers: 80 (Bistrotheque)

Operator: David Waddington
and Pablo FlackArchitecture: Archer Humphries
Architects

Interior Design: Love is Enough

Head Chef: Blaine Duffy

F&B Manager: Conor Sheehan

Head Bartender: Will Flower

www.cultureplex.co.uk

nuanced approach to food and beverage. In the lounge, for example, the fattoush salad with feta, and Chicken Kiev with celeriac remoulade, provides a hearty but relaxed dining experience. "There's something on the menu for each moment of the day," says Waddington. Appealing to the growing trend towards informal dining that has taken hold across the city and surrounding suburbs, the communal menu is designed with flexible workers and freelancers in mind, offering sharing plates like grilled bread, whipped ricotta, aubergine and parsley, accompanied by a selection of casual cocktails, including the Culturespritz, composed of rose vermouth, olorosso and sparkling wine.

In Bistrotheque, the culinary offering features a number of the team's staples, including their classic chicken with confit garlic and rocket, and much-lauded fish and chips. Nevertheless, this is also a defiantly crowd-pleasing menu, curated by Head Chef Blaine Duffy, which has been carefully crafted to suit the local palate.

Similarly, the extensive cultural programme curated by Producer and Strategist Katie Popperwell reflects the laidback nature of the dining experience. Guests can enjoy piano brunches or linger in the lounge as a string quartet fills the room with harmonic symphonies, learn how to shuck an oyster, or catch a viewing of *Sour Grapes* in the mini-cinema, complete with quality wines and bar snacks. Workshops from local creatives, including terrarium taster sessions with Prestwich-based plant studio Nonsense and conversations with event partners Homobloc, further add to the overall impression that this is a very contemporary reimagining of the traditional public hall.

A distinctive and considered take on hotel F&B, Waddington and Flack's latest offering has cleverly created a space for both visitors and residents to make their own, while respecting the city's strong personality and unique sense of self.