



## Rathbone Square

LONDON | 2017

Rathbone Square transforms the former Royal Mail site off Oxford Street into a new publicly-accessible garden square, designed by Gustafson Porter + Bowman. A place to be discovered and enjoyed, the central garden offers respite from the activity of Oxford Street. Lined with outdoor cafes and shops, the new space enhances the thriving cafe and gallery culture of Charlotte Street and the surrounding area. The garden lies at the heart of a new residential and commercial development designed by Make architects for Great Portland Estates.

In developing the design and exploring the concept, Gustafson Porter + Bowman aimed to respond to the special character of the surrounding streets, mews, and passageways and to invite a sense of discovery of the garden space. The central garden is a calm, secluded space, detached from the bustle of Oxford Street, Rathbone Place, and Newman Street. To draw passers-by into the garden, the concept sets up a visual connection from the street to the centre of the garden using light, water and reflection. The garden's plan is defined by bold geometric shapes which are clearly visible from the surrounding apartments and offices, now occupied by Facebook as their central London headquarters.

The water tables near each of the main entrances reflect the natural setting of a garden and encourage the public to explore the space within. The sculpting of the stone resembles flowing water grasses as one enters the square with more of the garden unfolding and presenting itself. On the western edge perennial planting provides softness, colour and texture to form a series of 'garden rooms'. The raised planters of honed brown granite create integrated benches and allow sufficient soil depth for Cherry and Magnolia trees, box hedging and understory planting. Water rills reflect the surrounding planting and fall towards two water cascades creating a calm and intimate environment to enjoy a moment of respite.

The central lawn rises gently towards a shade garden to the east. The lawn is framed by a sculpted timber bench, shade tolerant planting including Viburnum and Hydrangea, blue and white flowering perennials, and semi-mature Ginkgo and Gleditsia trees. Three entrances to the garden are marked by bronze gates designed by the artist Robert Orchardson. The theme of water is further celebrated with a public drinking fountain designed by the sculptor Alison Wilding. The water tables were developed with the collaboration of John Gould of Texxus.

Altogether, the new garden encompasses a variety of spaces that enrich the experience of the visitor and improve the quality of public space in central London. The space is welcoming and free to enjoy for all members of the public whether they live in the development, work in the offices, or simply passing by.





**PROJECT OBJECTIVES**

New garden square in Fitzrovia, providing new public connections across a mixed development with a private residential garden, roof terraces and a brown roof

**CLIENT**

Great Portland Estates

**PROJECT DURATION**

2011-2017

**SIZE**

2,000m<sup>2</sup> (1,800 central garden + 200 residential garden).

**STATUS**

Completed September 2017

**BUDGET**

£4m

**TEAM**

Architect - Make

Structural Engineer - AKT II

M&E / Sustainability Engineer - Hilson Moran

Planning Consultant - DP9

Project Manager - Buro Four

Cost Consultant - Arcadis

Main contractor - Lendlease

Hard landscape contractor - Maylim

Soft landscape contractor - Willerby Landscapes

Developer - Great Portland Estates

Water feature consultant - The Fountain

Workshop

Water feature texturing - Texxus

Metalwork - Kent Stainless

Timber bench fabrication - Woodscape

Artists - Alison Wilding, Robert Orchardson

