

StudioMB

Press release

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Scottish Design Agency Transforms Middle Eastern Palace

Scottish design agency, Studio MB, are proud to announce the official opening of the Al Salam Palace Museum in Kuwait. This has been Studio MB's first landmark project in the Middle East and the studio's largest project to date.

In 2013, Studio MB was commissioned by the Amiri Diwan, the royal household of the Amir of Kuwait, to transform the shell of the former Al Salam Palace into a new, immersive national museum and visitor experience.

The Al Salam Palace Museum now tells the 300-year plus history of Kuwait through the achievements of its 15 rulers who have led the country since 1718.

Before its restoration by Studio MB, the iconic Al Salam Palace once hosted world leaders and heads of state from 1964 until it was badly damaged and abandoned after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990.

The restored and repurposed palace now delivers 26 exhibition galleries in two immersive museum visitor experiences, a suite of temporary exhibition galleries, an underground courtyard with a café, shop and education centre, a digital library complex, and a suite of VIP reception facilities.

At the centre of this building is a large dramatic circular atrium that has become the stage for a 290 degree projected cinematic overview around its perimeter and a 5 metre wide 'Well of History' AV delivery sunk below floor level at its centre.

Exhibitions on the ground floor present the history of the Al Salam Palace itself through carefully restored room sets and AV deliveries to recount the important role it played in the thirty years following Kuwait's independence, until its destruction and its subsequent recent restoration. Exhibitions on the first floor document the history of Kuwait through the achievements of the country's fifteen rulers. These displays are housed within nine innovative and immersive galleries, across one whole floor of the building.

Studio MB, based in Edinburgh's historic New Town, won the commission to create the masterplan and concept design in 2013, beating competition from around the world. Work on site for the interior fit out has been underway since December 2015, with a Royal Inauguration held in 2019 ahead of the official opening to the public.

The award-winning design agency has more than 16 years' experience in transforming museums, heritage attractions and brand experiences all over the world, including Leicester's King Richard III Visitor Centre, the D-Day Story in Portsmouth, Durham Cathedral, the Triumph Factory Visitor Experience, and The Story of JCB Customer Experience in both the UK and in Delhi, India.

Charlie Barr, Founding Director at Studio MB, said:

"We are incredibly proud to have been part of this amazing and unique project in Kuwait. The restoration, research and creative design process has transformed the palace, retaining its original aesthetic, but now with immersive storytelling and display environments."

"The history of Kuwait through the achievements of its fifteen rulers required significant research to source contemporary accounts of people who travelled to Kuwait throughout its history. Studio MB, with historian Allan Carswell, supported the client by searching and locating original documents, photographs and film content from this time and then helping to map this narrative across the gallery spaces."

Craig Mann, Founding Director at Studio MB, said:

"The project at Al Salam has been one of our largest projects to date and we're delighted to announce that it is now open to the public. We were thrilled to be chosen as the agency to design this experience and we believe that it is going to be a massive success."

"The innovative, interactive exhibitions communicate the history and heritage of Kuwait in a way that engages all ages, and we can't wait to see people's reactions. Studio MB has designed over 15,000 square metres of space within the museum. It also houses an astonishing 96 separate AV deliveries!"

Over the past 5 years, around 49 staff members have worked on the project, with 19 different team members having travelled out to be on station in Kuwait, or at off-site inspections undertaken in Dubai, Istanbul, Milan, London and more locally, with world leading showcase manufacturers, ClickNetherfield, in Livingston.

Studio MB are the project's lead design team delivering content research, copywriting, interpretive, graphic, exhibition, interior, multimedia, software and lighting design supported by ISO Design, Freakworks, Nich Smith Lighting Design and LightMedium.

Craig went on to say:

"When we first visited the Al Salam Palace building, the state of ruin and disrepair was quite shocking. It was evident that there was a lot of structural damage to the building, from shattered walls and torn away interiors, to fire scorched rooms and bullet holes where attempts had been made to deliberately destroy it. We knew it was going to be a mammoth task. Miraculously, the massive chandelier that hung proudly in the centre of the building remained almost intact."

“We are delighted to have helped restore this beautiful Palace to its original glory, and transform it into a state-of-the-art Museum for the people of Kuwait and the region.”

For more information about Studio MB and to learn more about the Al Salam Palace project, visit www.studiomb.co.uk and follow the agency on social media: @studiombdesign on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

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**For more information and images please contact:
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Notes to editors

About Studio MB

Founded in Edinburgh in 2004, Studio MB designs and delivers immersive visitor experiences and stand out exhibitions for museums, heritage attractions and leading global brands across the length of the UK, as well as internationally in the Middle East and India.

Studio MB are designers, storytellers, interpreters and project managers. They research, masterplan, storyboard and produce design solutions to meet the needs of each and every project. They learn to think and act like clients' visitors or customers, and tailor each design to their requirements.

The multi-disciplinary design team of interpretive exhibition designers, graphic designers and project management professionals, combined with their specialist sub-contractors, deliver unique design solutions and experiences that inspire, involve and inform.

Awards

Nominated: European Museum of the Year 2019 – The European Museum Forum
The D-Day Story

Winner: Design Grand Prix – Scottish Design Awards 2018
Triumph Factory Visitor Experience

Winner: Public Space Design – SBID International Design Award 2018
Triumph Factory Visitor Experience

Winner: Best Exhibition Design – Scottish Design Awards 2018
Triumph Factory Visitor Experience

Winner: Visitor Attraction of the Year (under 50,000) – Visit York Tourism Awards 2018
York Amy Museum

For further details, please visit www.studiomb.co.uk/studio