

BLOOMINGDALE'S

360 MALL, KUWAIT

Design: UXUS
Opening date: March 2017
Store size: 8,639 sq m

Bloomingdale's department store has opened the doors to its second international store in Kuwait, following the success of its Dubai site that launched in 2010, and in advance of opening another store at Al Maryah Central in Abu Dhabi next year. Putting a firm footprint on the Middle East's ever growing luxury retail market, Bloomingdale's Kuwait offers everything from a fragrance theatre to a personalisation lounge.

'Kuwait is one of the world's most sophisticated and upscale fashion markets, and Bloomingdale's is excited to serve new and existing customers from Kuwait. We believe we will bring a new dimension in fashion and style for which Bloomingdale's is known worldwide,' says Tony Spring, chairman and chief executive officer of Bloomingdale's.

The store is a women-only offer and eclipses a transactional model by connecting hospitality, retail and service through a cohesive, sophisticated approach. Personalised services, VIP touch points, integrated digital and curated elements come together seamlessly, encouraging exploration and indulgence.

With a holistic view, UXUS designed the luxury retail space to integrate with Bloomingdale's distinct visual identity. Throughout the store, consumers will enjoy the New York-style elegance behind the Bloomingdale's heritage. From arrival to purchase, UXUS has considered every part of the consumer journey.

'How can you take a true icon of New York and tailor it to what is needed in Kuwait, which was a women's only offer?' says Oliver Michell, chief creative officer & co-founder of UXUS, regarding the brief. 'The brief objective was very clear - to take women's clothing, keep all the codes and all the brand hallmarks of Bloomingdale's and adapt them for a Kuwait customer.'

Through the VIP entrance there's a large service area, offering click & collect and a concierge service. For people using click & collect, there are several fitting rooms where ladies can try on outfits there and then. The concierge team will wrap the >







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items and take them to the customer's car.

The store includes extensive beauty and fragrance - the latter a very important part of the Middle Eastern lifestyle - and these departments are proportionally bigger than in other stores and include a lot of consultation areas. A contemporary 'Discover Beauty' area is a younger and more dynamic zone, where new brands are brought in featuring the latest skincare and fragrances. 'Experience Beauty' is almost like a personal shopper for beauty, but they do treatments and applications here as well: you don't necessarily need to buy the products before. It is a service heavy area as the Kuwaiti clientele is very service orientated. They also do brand take overs and special events in this area.

The ready-to-wear department also features a substantially sized eveningwear

department, as well as a personal shopper service with fitting rooms. 'She will have a whole wardrobe set up before she arrives, she'll be taken for food and drink and she can spend as long as she likes and have an entire consultation and personal shopper experience,' says Michell.

The biggest floor is the upper level at 1,500 m sq, double the size of the ground and mezzanine levels, and is dedicated to shoes and handbags with an adjoining restaurant that is inspired by New York apartments. Customers can shop shoes and handbags and have food brought to them, or they can dine in the restaurant and have shopping brought to their table instead. The restaurant walls feature bespoke sketches by some of the fashion designers featured in the store, bringing the connection together between fashion and cuisines.

'From a cultural point of view, shopping is a huge part of social life in Kuwait. Going to Bloomingdale's - which is a newcomer to the market, it's a recognised brand, it's glamorous, it brings in a lot of brands that weren't accessible previously - is a huge draw and to have the whole personal shopper experience too is great,' he adds.

'The idea was that "she" can spend a whole day with her friends and family in the department store for a meal, browse the collections, have a personal shopper take her round and create her wardrobe. Or if she had her husband with her or a male member of the family, he can spend time in the restaurant while she does her shopping.'

UXUS took a lot of queues from the original New York store, such as the black and white chequer board floor. There are several lighting features at the entrances and digital screens, as well as a large skylight like in the New York store. A statement 'Takeover Tower' connects each floor by merging digital with physical merchandised displays.

'Kuwaitis love colour, so we have used a lot of black and white for the elements that are likely to stay for a long time like the architectural finishes, and for sofas, rugs and all decorative items, we brought in the colour. There's a lot of love for intensive jewel tones, so we put in some accent jewel tones against neutral colours,' says Michell.

'We looked at a lady called Barbara D'Arcy who used to be the main stylist for Bloomingdale's and she brought in lots of things that we think of as hallmarks of the brand such as the black and white chequer board. She was a very glamorous lady who travelled around the world collecting the latest trends from Scandinavian style to French Riviera to Moroccan, and she would bring them to New York and create these incredible showrooms.'

Lighting design specialist Nulty has created a flexible lighting scheme that is chic, clean and bold, and complements the architectural forms and rich material palette - like the champagne metal joinery that's made to sparkle and the texture of beautifully crafted wall coverings and oriental carpets.

UXUS is currently working on the design concept for Bloomingdale's at Al Maryah Central in Abu Dhabi, which is scheduled to open late 2018/early 2019. **RF**