

umdasch

THE STORE MAKERS

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Stone Island No stone left unturned

A complex build, ultra-precision and the need to flex a programme that required the umdasch General Contracting team to mesh in with multiple suppliers from around Europe, has resulted in a stunning new London flagship for Stone Island.

The third in a flagship design from Marc Buhre, an industrial designer from Heidelberg and founder of architecture studio Zeichenweg TM, Stone Island London opened on Soho's Brewer Street in July. Conceived in line with the upscale fashion brand's philosophy as "both an object of design and a container of clothes", the general contracting of a complex retail project was delivered by umdasch.

After a competitive tender, the umdasch General Contracting team won the project work early in 2021 and took over three adjacent units that had been operated by Stone Island owner Four Marketing as client and paymaster. These had been amalgamated into one, 300 m² unit and returned to shell and core.

Challenging times require highest commitment

The project was to deliver the flagship design, which features a natural stone floor manufactured off-site in Italy, distinctive fixtures for clothing and an urban style back wall behind the cash desk, which wraps round and flows to the changing rooms. Unusually, the same quality fit-out is also evident throughout the back-of-store areas.

Originally, the stone flooring was to be installed by the Italian manufacturer, but COVID restrictions meant the team could not travel and therefore the umdasch team fitted what head of General Contracting UK, Mike Smart, says was akin to assembling a large, ultra-precise jigsaw puzzle.

"I have never worked on a scheme that required such complete precision," he recalls. "We were managing a range of suppliers, plus manufacturing some of the display equipment, and because major elements were made off-site they had to be absolutely correct to the millimetre. Therefore, the preparation was critical, because if that had been wrong the whole project would have been off."

General Contracting by umdasch: Taking care of everything

The complexity of this was only made more challenging by the fact that the flooring is natural stone and that regular shapes had to meet curved stone footings below the display fixtures and at the fabricated units that feature in the large display windows.

“Realistically, there are always going to be slight deviations when you are handling a natural product and so our flooring team had to work meticulously to ensure that everything was just so,” says Mike. “On top of that, because of COVID challenges and the such, our program had to be fairly fluid and continually adjusted – whether it be equipment, displays, flooring or air handling units – that had been held up. Hence we had to adjust the schedule and order of works to flex and accommodate this.”

Mike stresses that successful execution was down in no small part to open lines of communication, with constant dialogue with the client and design teams including architects/designers Dariia Maximova and Chiara Negri, client’s project & cost consultant Darren Smith from Kempton Smith, local architect Alex Smith of Studio P Design and umdasch’s project manager Ian White. This enabled umdasch and the wider team to make quick and pragmatic decisions to keep the project moving forwards.

The store also sits below residential units in London’s busy Soho district and Mike recalls that open dialogue with resident representatives, Centre Management and Security ensured that the neighbours remained on board during the 16 weeks of construction and fit-out.

All’s well that ends well

The result is a double-fronted store with an urban vibe, offset by natural materials and low level lighting, with clever use of suspended fittings and wraparound mesh detailing that links the back wall, cash desk and fitting rooms at the rear of the outlet.

“For me the success of this project was the clear communication, lack of ambiguity and the mutual trust developed,” says Mike. “We were able to be flexible and be decisive throughout, constantly adjusting and flexing the programme to keep the construction and fit-out on track.”

Fact Box:

Location: London, UK

Sales Area: 300 m2

Opening: 06/2021

umdasch Services: General Contracting, Manufacture, Installation

Architect: Zeichenweg TM



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