

Questions raised about US museum's Abraham Lincoln hat

It has been a question plaguing the museum dedicated to one of America's greatest presidents: Is the hat real? The hat in question is of the stovepipe variety that adorned the head of Abraham Lincoln—recognized for his fashion sense and lauded for ending slavery. The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum in Illinois had displayed the chocolate brown, beaver fur hat as one that had in fact been on the 16th US president's head.

It is a prized possession, a big visitor draw, and valued at \$6.5 million—one of only three such Lincoln hats displayed at an American museum. But it may not be Lincoln's hat after all. FBI analysts and curators at the national Smithsonian Institution have analyzed the hat at the unpublished request of the Illinois museum's foundation, an independent organization responsible for fundraising and acquiring objects.

This undated image Courtesy of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum in Chicago, Illinois, show a stovepipe hat reportedly belonging to US President Abraham Lincoln. —AFP

Even DNA testing was done—comparing samples taken from the hat to Lincoln's blood recovered from the night of his assassination in 1865. The result: inconclusive. Historians wrote a report telling the museum it "might want to soften its claim about the hat" given the fact that its origins cannot be definitively authenticated. The results were not shared with the public until Chicago radio station WBEZ uncovered them this week.

Museum chief Alan Lowe expressed frustration over the foundation's secrecy, but downplayed the DNA test results, saying it would be hard to get a perfect match from an 180-year-old item handled by many people. "It is important to understand that neither of these initiatives produced new evidence about the hat's origins," Lowe said in a statement. Thanks to the publicity, the museum will begin a new search for evidence about the hat's past, he added.

"What we learn, no matter what it says about the hat's origins, will be shared with the public." For now, the hat is stowed away. The museum will decide how to present it to visitors once the additional research is completed.—AFP



A patron looks at Government of California (1969) by Peter Saul during an exhibition at the Met Breuer, Metropolitan Museum of Art titled 'Everything is Connected: Art and Conspiracy' in New York. — AFP

NY's Met to sublease modern art annex in surprise move

New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art made a surprise announcement Friday it would reboot stalled renovations of its modern and contemporary wing, and temporarily turn over the building housing the works to the nearby Frick Collection. In 2014, the Met had announced it would rebuild its southwest wing that runs along Fifth Avenue at an estimated cost of \$600 million—but its deteriorating financial situation forced the museum to rein in its plans.

Despite pulling in record crowds, the storied institution—one of the world's largest art museums with collections spanning the globe from antiquity onward—was forced to cut costs by curbing hiring, announcing voluntary buyouts and postponing the renovation project by several years. Thomas Campbell, who had led the Met since 2009, then stepped down in 2017, with some accusing him of trying to do too much too soon.

During his tenure, the museum had opened a modern and contemporary art annex, the Met Breuer, in the Madison Avenue building formerly home to the Whitney Museum of American Art. Critics admonished the move, saying the Met was dividing its resources in an already financially strapped time. Under the new arrangement, the Met will essentially sublease the building to another mainstay of the Upper East Side, the Frick Collection, as that museum renovates its own building, a Gilded Age mansion.

Letting the Frick finish off the last several years of the building's eight-year lease would allow the Met to save some \$18 million, according to The New York Times. A spokeswoman for the Frick told AFP its own construction would take an estimated two years. The Met's lease for the Breuer building will expire in 2023. It remains unclear what will happen next to the concrete, inverted pyramid-shaped museum opened in 1966. A spokesman for the Whitney, which still owns the modernist building designed by Bauhaus-trained architect Marcel Breuer, declined to comment on what might next be in store for the space.—AFP

LUXURY THEATER BY RHODES OPENS IN KUWAIT

By Ben Garcia

If you are fascinated by luxury ambiance and taste, try Theater by Rhodes. This place is not a hotel, but a cinema and a restaurant in one. This is a place that defines real essence of comfort and luxury. Kuwait Times interviewed Gary Rhodes, the man behind this new concept in Kuwait.



Kuwait Times: Tell us about your visit to Kuwait.

Rhodes: This is my third visit to Kuwait - it's nice to come back again for the opening of Theater by Rhodes. Cooking at another place is really fascinating - more so at one of my Rhodes projects. We started in Dubai at the Mall of the Emirates. Now I am here in Kuwait and we are growing. This place is unique and beautiful, and will create a very impressive touch from the concept to the ambiance and food. This is something that is going to appeal to a mass audience. We use fresh ingredients and cook right here in our kitchen from scratch.

KT: How are people going to eat inside the theater - isn't it quite dark?



Rhodes: Here's the way we do it. Customers will come first to the lounge. You will be served your appetizer and drinks, then ushered to reclining seats by our staff. While seated, you will enjoy popcorn, then our staff will get your main course. You will enjoy it while watching the movie - it is a completely different set-up of a theater with the best recipes by Rhodes. Dessert will be served as well. The staff will never block the screen because it is designed not to disturb customers watching movies. We are glad to have partnered with Vox Cinema to realize this concept. Our seats are limited to 18 to 24.

KT: Who has been your greatest inspiration?

Rhodes: It's the people I worked with who are my real inspirations - people that come across my journey and gave a bit of what they've got and I absorb it. The greatest of them is my Rhodes family - they changed the whole approach and concept of food. I am learning every day, and you never stop learning in this industry.

KT: How did you derive this particular concept?

Rhodes: When I came to Kuwait, I got the opportunity to meet the Vox Cinema CEO.

Maybe four years ago we discussed the Theater by Rhodes. The CEO understands quality food and luxury space. I share a similar passion with the CEO, so I didn't have a hard time in introducing my cinema concept combined with food. Soon we will be in Saudi Arabia, but one step at a time.

KT: How is the menu different from the rest?

Rhodes: We want to add a fresh edge to the recipes. People come not just for movies, but they come because they like our food. We have several signature foods offered here like the famous and most prestigious New York daily burger. This burger is made from scratch. We have salads, main courses, desserts and beverages. We make them all by hand - the flavor is great. The dishes are also not very expensive - people can afford and enjoy them.

KT: How do you foresee the concept to work in Kuwait?

Rhodes: We know that Kuwaitis love to eat good food. People also want to go to a movie and enjoy. Now you will not just enjoy the movie, you will enjoy food consumed in a most comfortable venue. The cinema offers not just pure entertainment and comfort, but a soft reclining seat too. So it's not just the experience but the luxury and quality we offer our customers. We will be changing the menu perhaps three times a year to maintain a fresh look.

KT: What are your plans for Rhodes in Kuwait?

Rhodes: Maybe open more venues of this concept in Kuwait and the rest of the Middle East. As mentioned, I am not in a hurry, but of course we will expand. We already have plans in Saudi Arabia.



Dubai Design Week introduces new element within Downtown Design

Kuwait Times spoke to Rawan Kashkoush, Head of programming at Dubai Design Week about the upcoming event which will take place on November 12 - 17, 2018. Hundreds of designers from all over the world participate every year to showcase their unique artistic designs, but this year Downtown Design has added a new element to the mix.

Kuwait Times: From which countries are the participants who will be introducing their designs and projects during Dubai Design Week?

Rawan Kashkoush: Global Grad Show is the world's largest exhibition of graduate students' design from over 100 universities from all over the world. Downtown Design hosts over 100 brands and designers from the region and beyond including the Portuguese, Italian and the Polish Pavilions. Design weeks from the region, including Amman, Beirut and Casablanca, will unite within Downtown Editions, a new element introduced this year within Downtown Design.

Abwab, a showcase of design from the Middle East will host explorations of design in 5 individual pavilions design by UAE-based architects; the pavilions are from Amman, Beirut, Dubai, KSA and Kuwait City. Le French Design is an exhibition from France, Vitra is a Swiss company showing the works of design classics from the US and Europe. d3 Design Stories will naturally showcase a local design force, and UAE Modern will host a sustainability conference including speakers from Italy, Taiwan, Lebanon, and Australia, amongst many more. The diversity of designers is a reflection of the essence of Dubai, a gateway city that belongs to everyone.

KT: Is the registration still open for potential participants?

Kashkoush: Our deadline for submissions was on August 1, 2018; Dubai Design Week invites all those interested to visit the event between November 12 - 17, 2018 in order to experience the full program and plan ways to participate for the 2019 edition. The platform is for all interested designers, with a focus on regional creative innovation.

KT: Are there certain conditions and rules to accept the participation or their projects?

Kashkoush: None at all, all ideas are welcome as long as they are original. Dubai Design Week's program team will receive all ideas however young or fully formed they are. We do request that participants always be mindful of how they plan to cover the costs of manufacturing their product, installation, or covering flights and accommodation should they want to participate in a talk or workshop.

KT: What is the expected number of visitors for this year?

Kashkoush: Considering our annual growth, the last attendance recorded at 60,000, we expect to see this number grow by 25 percent this year.

KT: What's the percentage of GCC visitors out of the total number?

Kashkoush: 35 percent with a majority from the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait City and some from Bahrain.



KT: Are the activities free of charge?

Kashkoush: Yes, almost all activities are free to attend. Certain workshops may require a small fee to cover the material costs. The entrance ticket for Downtown Design, our commercial furniture and product trade show, is AED 55 at the door, however if you register online for a ticket, it is free of charge.

KT: Will all or some of the artworks and projects be for sale?

Kashkoush: Dubai Design Week is undoubtedly internationally recognized as a window to creative innovation from the region. Downtown Design, the Middle East's leading design trade fair, including its new element Downtown Editions, offers products and furniture that visitors can purchase. The objects vary from furniture created for wider consumption, and a selection of limited edition and specially crafted. The trade show is especially devised to promote design as a purchasable commodity. Ripe Market, which takes place on the weekend, also smaller objects to take home.

KT: In which location will the Dubai Design week be held?

Kashkoush: Dubai Design District (d3) is the hub of activity for major exhibitions of Dubai Design Week such as Global Grad Show, Downtown Design and Downtown Editions, and Abwab, amongst a diverse array of participants who will build temporary exhibits in the outdoor spaces of the district, however Dubai Design Week is a city-wide event, with activities taking place at Alserkal Avenue, and even at the Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum Solar Park; the Solar Decathlon.