

AND THE AWARD GOES TO... STELLA THEATRE



Pure Fitout, Northern Ireland's fastest-growing fit out and installation specialist, has recently completed a nine-month renovation of the Stella Theatre in Dublin. Appointed by Press Up Entertainment Group, the 1920s cinema project was recognised by the 2018 Building in Architecture Awards, winning the Building Refurbishment for a Single Building or Development category.

Situated in the Rathmines area of Dublin, Stella Theatre was purchased by Press Up Entertainment Group in 2015 having been closed to the public for over a decade. With ambitious plans to return the theatre to its former glory, Press Up appointed Pure Fitout alongside renowned designers O'Donnell O'Neill Design Associates to work on the renovation and refurbishment of the 1920s cinema.

The original Stella Theatre opened in 1923 and was once Ireland's largest cinema with a capacity of 1,284. It was converted into a two-screen theatre in the 80s before closing its doors in 2004. After some years of neglect, the 885 sq m art deco building became a hidden treasure behind a 1980s modern façade.

Having received a stunning design brief Pure Fitout provided a 360° outlook on development, utilising meticulous restoration techniques and high-quality workmanship to preserve the stunning original features of the art deco theatre.

'Having worked closely with Pure Fitout on a number of projects throughout Ireland, we were confident that the team would not only provide the high standards of delivery required for such a prestigious project, but that its specialist in-house capabilities would produce the beautiful, artistic interior that only very skilled craftsmanship can achieve,' said Laura Arnold, Head of Marketing & PR at Press Up Entertainment.

Following an extensive brief, Pure Fitout worked hard to retain as much of the original art deco décor as possible, replicating and modernising new elements where required to complement the design. As such, many original features remain, including the original cast iron boiler located in the basement and a suspended projection room still holding film reels from the 1920s. Pure Fitout

played a crucial role in bringing the vision of both Press Up and award-winning designers O'Donnell O'Neill Design Associates, into reality – highlighted by the quality of the materials used such as brass, bronze and marble.

'Collaboration was always going to be crucial for this project,' said Ronan Higham, Managing Director and Founder at Pure Fitout. 'Before arriving on site we spent a lot of time working alongside O'Donnell O'Neill Design Associates on the technical aspects of the project, such as the selection of materials, to ensure that the design would work in practice whilst keeping the costs within budget.'

These meetings continued throughout the lifetime of the project on a weekly basis to assess the progress of the restoration and make alterations when needed.'

The initial stage of the project included stripping back as much as possible to the original design, including the mezzanine floor and walls that had been installed during its 1980s conversion. Once complete, the next stage was to refurbish the building envelope – including remedial work on the theatre's roof.

The restoration of the façade required the removal of blockwork which revealed decorative granite pilasters and a large art deco window that had once been central to the character of the renowned Stella Theatre.

Pure Fitout's team was delighted to find that the feature window had remained in moderately good condition whilst hidden behind concrete. By using old photographs taken during the heyday of the theatre, Pure Fitout was able to faithfully restore the façade to its former glory. This included largely replacing the granite decorative elements and incorporating new doors and windows to replicate the original design.

Having completed the structural elements of the project, including insulating the walls and roof, Pure Fitout began delivering the interior works to Stella Theatre. Conscious of the need for sympathetic restoration throughout the theatre whilst complementing modernity and operational requirements, the full

