**Bahrain Custom House – Doka XPress**

**[[START]]**

**Headline:**

The restoration of Bab Al Bahrain’s historic customs house

**Standfirst:**

Located in the Bahraini capital’s former central business district on Customs Square, Bab Al Bahrain is a historical building that marks the entrance to the Manama Souq. Thanks to an initiative launched in collaboration between the Ministry of Transportation and Telecommunication and the Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities (BACA), this Belgrave-designed gateway is set to once again play a central role as Manama’s post office.

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With initial plans laid out in 1936, Bab Al Bahrain literally translated as the Gateway of Bahrain served as the country’s customs house in what was once the centre of Manama. Since this time, like many of its neighbouring countries, Bahrain has expanded its national footprint through land reclamation and where once this culturally historic building used to be close to the lapping waters of the Arabian Gulf, it is now separated by the Bahrain Financial Harbour and King Faisal Highway.

Working under the Ministry of Transportation and Telecommunication and BACA, studio Anne Holtrop, the Dutch architect responsible for delivering Kuwait’s Milan Expo 2015 pavilion has been charged with sympathetically overseeing the conservation and adaptation of the building to once again play an active role in the city’s community.

According the sources, the ambition of the proposed architecture ‘aims not to reproduce what once was, but to exist – together in a dialogue that promotes coexistence without tension.’ While the historic part of the building will serve as staff offices and public counters, a new-to-build exposed concrete structure will hold the mailboxes and sorting desks, which will be distributed across the two-storey open space.

Working closely alongside the other project stakeholders, Doka Bahrain was commissioned in two primary capacities. Firstly, to supply formwork components and engineering design for the wall and top slab of the mock-up and secondly the same services for the main project, which will include the external and internal walls in addition to columns and slabs. In both cases, solutions will be compatible for fair face concrete and will be assembled and erected at site, as per Doka’s engineering drawings and method statements. Systems so far confirmed in the brief include Top-50 for the walls and D3 for the top slab. At the time of writing the mock-up has already been completed and the main project will likely be delivered in Q2 2019.

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