

Mikael Serabian

Creative Director / Head of Creative

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PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

Creative Director with 25 years of experience across exhibition and experiential design, brand identity, art direction, and digital design. Experienced in building and leading multidisciplinary creative teams and delivering large-scale cultural, government, and institutional projects across Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Europe, and Asia. Creative leadership includes the Saudi Pavilion at La Biennale di Venezia across three editions and Saudi Arabia's presence at Expo 2025 Osaka. Led creative for more than 100 competitive pitches, converting 53 into wins and subsequently delivering 47 as live projects. Winner of Best Art and Culture Event at the Saudi Event Awards 2025 for The Incense Road Experience in AIUla. Also led the introduction of AI-assisted production into studio workflows, establishing practical tools and processes.

CORE SKILLS

Creative Leadership: Creative direction, art direction, team building and leadership, hiring, performance management, creative budgeting, pitches and new business, tenders and RFPs, stakeholder management.

Brand & Communication: Brand identity systems, brand guidelines, campaign strategy, bilingual Arabic and English design, typography.

Exhibition & Experiential Design: Exhibition design, environmental graphics, wayfinding, venue branding, catalogue and editorial design, merchandise, public programming materials, print production.

Digital & AI: UI/UX, web and mobile app design, motion graphics, social media, AI-assisted production workflows, prompt systems, team enablement.

Tools: Adobe Creative Suite (InDesign, Photoshop, Illustrator, After Effects, XD), Figma, and a range of generative AI platforms.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Independent Creative Director

Freelance | Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Feb 2026 - Present

- Provide creative direction and strategic advice on brand identity and exhibition projects for clients on a freelance basis.

Head of Creative Department

Aimes | Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Nov 2022 - Jan 2026

- Recruited and led creative department of 10+ across art direction, graphic design and 3D, with responsibility for creative direction, hiring, performance reviews, and day-to-day team management.
- Won 53 of 100+ competitive pitches led across three years, delivering 47 as live projects for government, cultural and institutional clients.
- Managed senior creative relationships with the Royal Commission for AIUla, Saudi Ministry of Culture, UNESCO, Villa Hegra, Royal Commission for Riyadh City, Red Sea Global, and MISK, presenting and defending creative work to director and ministry level stakeholders.

- Directed the creative programme for the Saudi Pavilion at La Biennale di Venezia across three editions: the International Art Exhibitions of 2022 and 2024, and Biennale Architettura 2025, the 19th International Architecture Exhibition. Scope included identity, catalogue, venue branding, wayfinding, merchandise, and bilingual collateral.
- Directed The Incense Road Experience in AIUla for the Royal Commission for AIUla, developing the identity, venue branding, catalogue, and public programming manuals for a five-month run that attracted more than 20,000 visitors. The project won Best Art and Culture Event at the Saudi Event Awards 2025.
- Led the creative direction for Desert X AIUla 2024, an outdoor contemporary art exhibition that welcomed more than 40,000 visitors, working closely with international curators, artists, and fabricators.
- Art-directed FAME: Andy Warhol in AIUla, the first Saudi exhibition produced with the Andy Warhol Museum; Ahmed Mater at UCCA Edge Shanghai, the largest solo exhibition by a Saudi contemporary artist in China; and the inaugural Islamic Arts Biennale in Jeddah.
- Delivered Saudi Arabia's creative presence at Expo 2025 Osaka for the Ministry of Culture, covering the concept, key visuals, venue branding, and merchandise for a programme marking 70 years of relations between Saudi Arabia and Japan.
- Delivered creative under a two-year framework agreement with the Heritage Commission, Saudi Ministry of Culture, which was renewed for a further two years. Projects brought Saudi craft and heritage to numerous international markets through the Saudi Pavilion at Artigiano in Fiera, Milan in 2022 and 2023, Paris Design Week, London Craft Week, and textile and handcraft exhibition in Mexico.
- Built creative budgets and resourcing plans for pitches and large-scale productions up to SAR 3M, approved at CFO and CEO level, and led creative input on tender and RFP submissions.
- Introduced AI-assisted production into the studio workflow, establishing a shared toolset across Midjourney, Claude, ChatGPT, Gemini, and Google AI Studio.

Freelance Senior Art Director

Independent | Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Nov 2016 - Nov 2022

- Art-directed live event and exhibition programmes for Filmmaster MEA, including projects for Aramco, the Arab Media Forum, King Abdulaziz Camel Festival, Sheikh Khalifa Excellence Award, and the Dubai Government Excellence Programme awards ceremonies in their 20th and 21st editions.
- Delivered identity, key visuals, and venue branding for Aimes projects including Leonardo da Vinci: Through Space and Time for Ithra and Aramco, the first Saudi exhibition of the Codex Atlanticus; Noor Riyadh: Light upon Light; and Evolution: Meet the Dinosaurs, including its interactive app and website. Pitched and won the Heritage Commission framework agreement that was subsequently delivered during tenure as Head of Creative at Aimes.
- Rebranded business units for The Executive Council of the Government of Dubai, including the Dubai Government Excellence Programme.
- Creative-directed film content for the Global Women's Forum 2020 with Prisme and Dubai Ladies Club, briefing editors and animators while also overseeing event branding and supporting collateral.
- Designed the web platform and companion mobile application for Evolution, leading UI/UX across both digital products.
- Delivered brand and communications work for Avantgarde on the Storm Water Tunnel and Waste to Energy programmes.

Art Editor, Wheels Magazine

Gulf News | Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Mar 2014 - Aug 2016

- Art-directed more than 120 issues of Wheels, Gulf News' weekly automotive magazine, overseeing editorial layouts, cover design, and photographic direction.

Senior Graphic Designer

Layalina | Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Apr 2010 - Feb 2014

- Designed editorial and campaign material for the regional lifestyle publication Layalina.

Senior Graphic Designer

Manific | Damascus, Syria

Dec 2008 - Feb 2010

Creative Officer

Nissan | Damascus, Syria

May 2002 - Nov 2008

Web Designer / Webmaster

Kodak Films | Yerevan, Armenia

Feb 2000 - Feb 2001

AWARDS

Winner, Best Art and Culture Event, Saudi Event Awards 2025, for The Incense Road Experience (Aimes)

EDUCATION

Bachelor of Software Engineering, 2009, Faculty of Information Technology, University of Damascus, Syria

LANGUAGES

Arabic: Native, Armenian: Native, English: Fluent, Russian & French: Basic conversational