

ARTS & CULTURE

Roar blends Emirati artistry and Japanese aesthetic in landmark



SHARJAH: Roar design studio, Dubai, has completed the new Middle Eastern headquarters of leading Japanese pharmaceutical company, Takeda, located in Dubai's pioneering business district, One Central. The 23,000 sq ft space fuses traditional Japanese aesthetic and Emirati craftsmanship with modern data-driven efficiency, to create a contemporary office, anchored in the local environment. Rooting the HQ into its new home city, various Arab, specifically Emirati, design elements are incorporated into the scheme. A series of artworks by Emirati designer Khalid Shafar adorn the space, made using khoos — a palm leaf weaving technique that was traditionally applied to build house roofs and floor mats.

The dried palm leaves are collected then cut and washed to weave. Roar's Founder and Creative Director Pallavi Dean said that "This ancient Emirati craft is similar to the Japanese tatami method, but while the Japanese use rice straw, Emiratis use palm tree leaves. We like this subtle synergy in crafts between the two cultures". Born in 1980 in Dubai, Shafar, as a business graduate of the American University in Dubai, worked in marketing and communication for almost seven years. In 2005, he completed a degree in Fine Arts in Interior Design and by the end of 2009, decided to leave marketing and follow his passion for design.

He has studied and specialised in Furniture & Objects design, first at Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design in London, UK, and then at the Centre for Fine Woodworking in Nelson, New Zealand. His approach to design includes his personal expression of form, movement, emotion and in particular, 'the tale' of objects. Dean points out that "Takeda wanted



↑ Pallavi Dean.

us to design an office that rivalled their new HQ in Tokyo, Japan. We felt it was important to draw inspiration from the company's Japanese heritage while also celebrating the local context in order to give the project a sense of place and differentiate it from other Takeda's offices around the world — this is most definitely Takeda in Dubai, not Tokyo!

"Real design magic often happens when

these two worlds — art and science — collide, and the new Takeda office is a clear example of this remarkable encounter. The space is designed around three themes — Japanese values, Emirati culture and data-driven design — resulting in a very intuitive yet reasoned project". The interior concept evokes key principles of the ancestral Japanese design philosophy highlighting a minimal, restrained architectural language with shoji screen geometry and textured materials such as wood, raw concrete and paper. The boardroom echoes the layout of a Japanese tea house while the reception area

↑ Textured material such as wood are used in the design.

references the genkan, the traditional entrance of a Japanese home.

The interior design takes its essence from Takeda: the colour palette alludes to the Takeda red while the shape of its logo is referenced throughout. The company's ethos dubbed 'Takeda-ism' and based on four key values — integrity, fairness, honesty and perseverance — is reflected in the material selection and sustainability goals.

Said Dean: "The project is LEED silver certified - as per ASHRAE standards, the building has achieved a 12.3 per cent savings on energy use, is well connected to public transport and is also provided with ample fresh air which helps in controlling pollutant sources, removing contaminants and enhancing occupants' health and comfort".

Roar is an award-winning interior design studio. Launched in 2013 as Pallavi Dean Interiors, it rebranded as Roar in 2018. Flagship projects include the Delano Dubai hotel, UAE offices for media firm Edelman and The Nursery of the Future for the UAE Prime Minister's Office.

It has collaborated with Herman Miller's workspace specialists on Space Allocation Modelling (SAM Analysis) in a bid to maximise the utilisation of the floor-plate. Applying the Herman Miller 'Living Office' framework, it has quantified a range of metrics such as square footage per employee and the percentage dedicated to individual, meeting and reception areas, to ensure optimal allocation of the

space to tasks and experiences that are of best possible value to end-users. As a result, 35 per cent of the office is devoted to 'hive' zones for individual work; 29 per cent to 'meeting' spaces; and 13 per cent to 'breakout' areas for informal social interactions.

Another key element of the design is the inclusion of biophilic principles. Dean said that "The idea of bringing the outdoors inside, in recognition of the inherent need of humans to be in contact with nature, has always been at the forefront of Roar's practice. "Daylight reduces fatigue; greenery reduces drowsiness; Kaplan's Attention Restoration Theory, or ART, proposes that exposure to nature is not only enjoyable, but can also improve focus and concentration." "In view of the recent pandemic, which reminded us of our far too distant relationship with nature, I believe this is something that will become a must in most interior design projects going forward".

Dean believes her designs reflect the influences of being born in India, raised in Dubai and working for several years in London. Having trained as an architect and a sustainability specialist, she is an active member within the UAE design community, and writes for industry publications, assists with trade events and mentors students in the region. Formerly interior design professor at American University of Sharjah, she aims to incorporate practical and theoretical research into her designs. Her portfolio includes a nursery school with integrated technologies and Interweave, an interactive lighting system designed in collaboration with Artemide for EuroLuce 2019.

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