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Projects & Hospitality | Spring Summer 2021



“A campus where the magic happens”

The Research Technology and Innovation Park of the **American University of Sharjah**, in UAE, designed by Roar, represents a green ecosystem where technology, business, government and academia collide

Imposing ceilings, interiors full of plants, sculptural lighting suspensions that float like clouds: this is the American University of Sharjah’s new Research Technology and Innovation Park, with interior curated by Pallavi Dean, Dubai-based designer, founder and creative director at Roar. “The design narrative is inspired by the ancient Falaj irrigation system, which was first used in Sharjah 5,000 years ago, allowing the communities to grow crops in the desert”. This ancestral technique is brought to life in multiple ways: “It is incorporated into the core of the building in that it inspires both the circulation and space planning. The building has two distinct atriums, each interpreting the Falaj concept through dramatic design statements. The 18 metre-wide domes in each atrium are adorned with organic-shaped metal grids at different levels, mimicking the sinuous shape of the irrigation system while creating an illusion of



Client: American University of Sharjah
 Interior design: Roar
 Lighting consultant: Nader Gamas
 Furnishings: Arper, Cassina, Classicon, La Chance, La Cividina, Lamm, Ligne Roset, Moooi, Moroso, Pedrali, Piet Boon, Steelcase, Tacchini, Vitra
 Lighting: Blux, Davide Groppi, Devorm, Grok, iGuzzini, Lasvit, Thornlux, TossB, Zumtobel
 Flooring: Cherry Tree Flooring, Terrazzo
 Carpets: 2tec2, Interface, Moooi, Object Carpets, OFIS
 Tiles: Marazzi, Monpar, Ornamenta
 Acoustic routed wall panels: Design Infinity
 Acoustic groove ceiling: Top Design
 Concrete texture paint: Top Design
 Wallpapers: Maharam
 Mesh and clear laminated acoustic glass partitions: Kaprel
 Perforated gypsum ceiling: Knauf
 Custom 3d metal mesh: Metal Fabrik

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 Photo credits: The Oculis Project



movement for the visitor when passing through the space. In the first atrium, the two large stretch fabric clouds also echo the flowing lines of the Falaj system. Again inspired by the Falaj method, the slab edges in the second atrium were treated with a 3D metal mesh feature with meandering rod forms". The campus, spanning over 25,000 sqm, encompasses several leasable offices for start-ups and incubators, anchor offices for blue-chip tenants and the AUS RTI Headquarter offices: "The challenge was to bring big-tech firms, local-tech entrepreneurs and academics together in one space to create an ecosystem where the magic happens, where technology, business, government and academia collide". The interiors provide a variety of spaces for a variety of needs. "The leasable offices overlooking the atriums, have been treated distinctively, from the use of concrete texture paint and terrazzo flooring to the 3D mesh. While many of the spaces are playful, in contrast, the offices are clearly recognised as a bridge to the



corporate world. The two atriums both tell a very distinctive story, the digital space is articulated by a parametrically designed cloud light sculpture and the Biophilic atrium is anchored by tall olive trees and sinuous lines in the joinery and facade cladding. Supporting women in the workspace is a key government objective so we designed a creche and kids area". In this project, biophilic design takes different forms. "For example through the use of plants and natural materials such as the indoor lawns and trees that can be found in the atriums or through biomimicry, a practice which champions nature as the greatest inspiration to design, which formed the basis of our project. Daylight reduces fatigue, greenery reduces drowsiness, Kaplan's Attention Restoration Theory 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".

