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Star style

Ahead of his Dubai return today, Indian designer Vikram Phadnis, who recently celebrated 25 years in the industry, discusses the past and the future

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Meeting one of the UAE's design stars

One of the region's most path-breaking and forward-thinking designers, Ammar Kalo, the UAE-based architect, designer and educator of Syrian heritage, is reimagining the global perception of the 'Made in UAE' label.

Winner of the Silver A'Design Award at the 2015 Milan Design Week, Kalo, who is known for employing advanced digital technology to explore new material processes, leapt into the global spotlight with his masterpiece of a chair, the Stratum.

"At the time, I was learning how to programme and run a five-axis CNC milling machine, which is a computer-controlled carving machine that can carve at multiple angles," says the designer. "Somewhere along the process, I wanted to explore a unique type of joint that could be milled on that machine and I started studying how they make traditional religious book stands, usually out of two solid interlocking pieces of wood."

PAST MEETS FUTURE

The process allowed Kalo the space to refine a formal design language he had been toying with for a while — one that tipped the hat to tradition and yet was a result of his explorations into digitally aided design.

"I think it's extremely important to know with exactitude how everything about a certain piece of design will coalesce into a final product," says the designer.

It is the same eye for detail that he hopes he imparts to his students at the American University of Sharjah, where he serves as the director of CAAD Labs (CAAD is a tool for computer-aided design).

The designer, who received his undergraduate education in Architecture at the American Univer-



Ammar Kalo with his award-winning Stratum chair.

Metal to wood, Kalo's digital programmes are designed to create marvels like his futuristic TV console.



sity of Sharjah and then a Master of Science in Architecture at the Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning, University of Michigan, in 2014 — returned to his alma mater with the vision of enthusing a new genera-

tion of designers. "At the University of Michigan, I met many academics and researchers that introduced me to a wide range of fields I wasn't aware of before, but at a certain level design education is very similar anywhere you

go in the world," he says.

The key difference between design education in the region and abroad is down to the topics different schools tend to focus on based on regional influences and global trends. "Since the UAE has

Design Diary

Live in style as Dubai-based interior designer **Pratyush Sarup** takes us into the world of interior design through this fortnightly feature



Kalo's design for the Stratum chair.

a strong culture of traditional values and is also a melting pot of multiple ethnicities, it's a rich ground for cultural exchange. Design in this region [has] the possibility of manifesting itself in many diverse ways."

Kalo, who beat some of the region's most promising design stars to win the emerging designer award at the *Harper's Bazaar* Interiors Design Awards 2015, has been inundated with requests for commissioned furniture pieces.

In addition, with two academic research projects and an upcoming showcase at Design Days Dubai in March, his plate is full.

"With the increase in... prestigious design competitions and scholarships in the region, it's becoming much more accessible for young designers to seek opportunities and get exposed to the fresh design scene," he says.

— **Pratyush Sarup is design manager at one of the UAE's premium interiors firms.**