

Before you say, 'But, of course, it's Dubai' - this is no ordinary piece of corporate décor. It's also a work of art

[khaleejtimes.com/wknd/an-office-desk-worth-dh500000-why-not](https://www.khaleejtimes.com/wknd/an-office-desk-worth-dh500000-why-not)

[HOME](#) > [WKND](#)

An office desk worth Dh500,000? Why not?

Keith Pereña

Filed on June 14, 2019

WKND



For the love of art: Dubai-based CEO Arif Saiyad with the Executive Desk

I was still on a Marvel-high when I came across a particular red-and-gold coloured desk at a hotel in Dubai, having just seen Avengers: Endgame that weekend. Seeing the numerous wooden cogs that adorned the entire desk come to life reminded me of the very first time Tony Stark (portrayed by Robert Downey Jr) suited up to become one of Marvel's biggest superheroes. It was rugged, almost industrial and a wonderful mix of various mechanisms teaming up to work. This office desk is exactly like that - except this desk costs Dh500,000. While I don't consider myself to be an art critic, I appreciate all things artistic. This office desk was created by American artist Dale Mathis who specialises in using pistons and gears to create something meaningful. Born in 1972, his work speaks of the discordant struggle of

urban American life, through visually and emotionally stimulating mixed media, high relief sculptures and design objects. To the uninitiated, imagine the insides of watch. Now, imagine that same interior structure and united movement put into something larger - like a corner table or photo frame.

The Mathis piece that this story focuses on is The Executive Desk. It does what it says on the tin with a little extra flair to boot. Located at the Okapi World Gallery inside the JW Marriott in Dubai, it is also the only one of its kind in the country. According to Lea Realon, who was my guide, the desk even found a buyer - it was purchased by Arif Saiyad, a Portuguese CEO based in Dubai from HE Khurram Shroff, the owner of the gallery. But there is more to this story than just an exchange.

The story goes that Saiyad was on the lookout for a statement piece to decorate his new office. After months of searching high and low for a piece that defined him, he chanced upon the Executive Desk displayed in the gallery. The design resonated with his passion for being an engineer whose main preoccupation revolves around what makes things tick. Like my own assessment, he too was attracted by its fierce red colour, as it reminded him of his favourite Marvel character. Ironman tributes notwithstanding, he also chose the table as it reminded him of his roots as an artist - having been raised by a mother who made art for a living.

The desk was initially offered to Saiyad as a present, but he had better things in mind. He told Shroff of his interest in buying it, only if the purchase went into supporting a charity of Shroff's choice. Shroff, himself a believer in helping cultivate entrepreneurship in today's youth, has decided to donate the money to the Arab Youth Venture Foundation. The chosen charity aims to support initiatives that nurture the innovative spirits and entrepreneurial mindsets of youth aged six to 24 across the Arab world.

As I glanced at the table, I couldn't help but register how it made me feel oddly calm. The gears moving in unison and perfect harmony create a space for someone to focus on the more important things in life.

In fact, the more I viewed the piece, the less it became a desk to me; instead, becoming a piece that depicts the beauty in harmony. In that sense, I think all good art serves a purpose greater than merely being on display.

keith@khaleejtimes.com

