

OFFICE *Party*

Design ALY VELJI
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Window dividers create zones in the mostly open office. **Table, chairs** (foreground), *Tipsy Palm*.

Muted colours and whimsical touches feel right on brand in designer Aly Velji's new office.

PERSONAL STYLE



"In designer we trust" is music to any creative's ears, so when Aly Velji heard a client say just that, he knew he had to cast it in stone or, better yet, paint it on the wall of his new office. It creates a fittingly tongue-in-cheek first impression for a designer who doesn't take himself, or design, too seriously.

The newly completed headquarters of Alykhan Velji Designs (AVD) is in Calgary's industrial Highfield neighbourhood, surrounded by tool shops, craft breweries and plenty of Aly's suppliers. "The location is a little unassuming, but I like that about it," says the designer, who was born in Tanzania, and has been based in Calgary since 1988. He had been hunting for a new office for more than two years, and as soon as he saw the space — a blank canvas three and a half times larger than his last workspace and only 10 minutes from home — Aly knew his search was over.

"I wanted our studio to reflect how we like to design at AVD, which is very collaboratively," says Aly, who made sure everyone at the firm had input. It was even more important that the team of five was at home in its new digs, after working remotely over the pandemic. "I really wanted our office to have a residential feel, a place where we all felt comfortable," he says. Soft, muted shades are soothing and a living room-like lounge is perfect for impromptu team catch-ups.

PERSONAL STYLE



ABOVE: This seating area was designed to resemble a residential living room.

Sofa, armchairs, rug, Crate and Barrel.

LEFT: Aly's own wallpaper design creates an arresting accent wall in the meeting room. **Ceiling fixtures** by Matteo Lighting, Robinson; **chairs, Urban Barn.**

You don't have to look too far to find wit and whimsy here. Painted arches hug the walls above each workstation and a geometric mural — designed by Aly as part of a wallpaper collection with Toronto's Rollout studio — gets creative juices flowing in the meeting room. For his own workspace, Aly chose burnt orange grasscloth as a backdrop for his art collection. "I wanted to create a luxe, layered look, and the gallery wall highlights pieces from some of my favourite artists," he says.

Personal mementoes find their way into just about every inch of the open-concept headquarters. The ornate console in the foyer is a prime example:



PERSONAL STYLE



“It’s a piece I’ve had for more than 15 years, and it’s come with me to all my office spaces,” says the well-travelled designer. There’s even a little boutique off the entry that gives lucky clients and visitors the opportunity to bring home the Aly Velji aesthetic. “Our shop is filled with some of my travel finds and one-of-a-kind pieces from artists and makers from around Canada,” he says.

Creating a cool and relaxed ambience was an important consideration for this project — and that goal has been achieved. “There’s always music playing, a scented candle burning and coffee brewing in our office,” says Aly. Clients may never want to leave.

TOP LEFT: A '70s-style caned chair takes pride of place in Aly's own workspace. **Grasscloth**, Crown Surface Solutions.

BOTTOM LEFT: A mini boutique sits just beside the reception area. **Console**, Reclaim Vintage; **wood floors** (throughout), Divine Flooring.

BOTTOM RIGHT: The sample library is open and airy with lots of counter space. **Cabinets**, Liber Design; **counters** by Caesarstone, The Granite Guys.

