



WHERE IMAGINATION AND ARCHITECTURE TAKE FLIGHT

Jaquar's facility in Manesar uses architecture to interlink tangible infrastructure and intangible assets

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Is it a bird? Is it a plane? Is it an airport terminal? No, it is bathware manufacturer Jaquar's corporate headquarters in Manesar, Haryana. The horizontal glass building is topped by the sweeping wings of a metaphorical eagle, ready to take flight, symbolizing a company with global ambitions. Set on a plateau, the office block is surrounded by landscaped gardens and water bodies, spread across a 12-acre campus. They draw attention to Jaquar's relationship with water, and highlight the company's focus on sustainability and conservation.

The idea of the metaphorical eagle as a symbol of global expansion was inspired by the classic 1970s novel, *Konathan Livingston Stagg* by Richard Bach, says Namith Verma, co-founders of Bengaluru-based GNA Architects, which designed the headquarters.

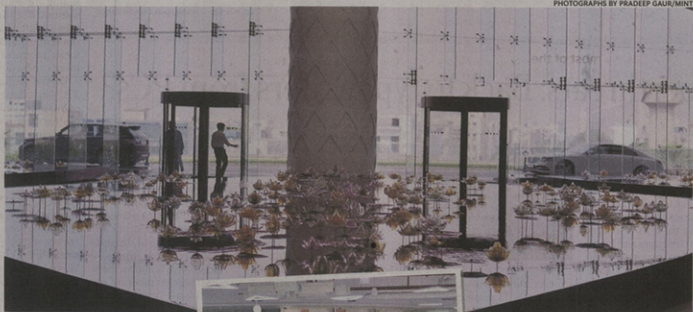
The dramatic flourishes continue indoors with custom-made artworks. Visitors are greeted by a steel and water sculpture by artist and designer Alex Davis. Facing the sculpture are five installation panels by designer Himanshu Dogra of graphic design firm Play Clan, each depicting a cosmic element. A few feet away is an experience centre by product designer Michael Foley, a walk-through space that asks visitors to pause and immerse themselves in a world of water, with artfully choreographed lights, sounds and visual effects. Upstairs, there are open-plan workstations and directors' cabins.

It's almost impossible to spot an important business element concealed somewhere on campus: a full-fledged factory. The ground floor and three upper floors house key corporate headquarters functions, including marketing, sales, human resources and finance. The factory, which manufactures Jaquar's wellness and lighting products, operates from two floors under ground.

"We wanted the global Jaquar headquarters to have manufacturing as its beating heart. It brings the factory closer to customers. But we didn't want a typical factory set-up, so we chose to camouflage it," says Rajesh Mehra, director and promoter, Jaquar group. The facility is one of seven manufacturing sites—six in India and one in South Korea.

This is a significant strategic choice. Factory buildings are rarely seen as anything other than functional in India. At the other end of the spectrum, some manufacturing facilities, such as Swiss furniture manufacturer Vitra's German factory campus, are bursting with buildings designed by global "starchitects" such as Frank Gehry and the late Zaha Hadid, whose fame has transformed the Vitra campus into a tourist attraction.

Yet Jaquar's strategic choice—to invest in an iconic corporate facility—is not just about



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expressing corporate ambition. It highlights four important ways in which architecture connects tangible infrastructure with intangible assets.

First, personal energy and wellness. Architecture can serve as a well-being anchor that nourishes personal energy and makes occupants happier. Thoughtful workspaces promote individual comfort and efficiency. "This building grounds Jaquar and brings with it pride and responsibility (to our workforce). Our people bring their families here, and they are also more responsible, more creative, more productive," says Narendra Arya, HR head. Conversations with several employees confirmed that the work environment offers sufficient legroom, common spaces and shared amenities, including an indoor sports room, a gym and a library.

Second, corporate values. Architecture serves as a mirror, reflecting corporate values in a three-dimensional manner. The plentiful breathing room in the Jaquar headquarters points to an employee-friendly work culture.

Third, sustainable resources and environments. Here, the Jaquar headquarters scores on many counts. It is Platinum-certified by the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) rating system. Its water and waste are recycled. Its net zero power con-



(from top) The exterior of the Jaquar global HQ building in Manesar; water is a big theme; aside from the factory, the space houses other business functions; and a panel designed by Himanshu Dogra.

sumption means that it produces as much energy annually as it creates, with innovative methods to lower energy consumption.

"As one of the top global manufacturers, one has a responsibility not just to keep customers happy, but to preserve the environment, to follow ethics in practice. Our products, plants and processes are green, as is the building," emphasizes Mehra.

Finally, brands and stories. Architecture provides a unique platform for corporate

brands to tell their stories in an experiential way. Jaquar has been especially creative in narrating the stories of its brands through art, sculpture and visual effects, and sharing it with its target audiences. "This building has created a lot of positive word-of-mouth in the architectural community and our associates. We feel very proud when visitors come to this building and say, 'This is a long drive but it's worth it.' It's helping our aspirations take shape," says Sandeep Shukla, head of marketing and communications, adding that they have hosted several events for architects as well as industry training programmes on campus.

This is not to say that the facility doesn't have its share of hits-and-misses. Its huge directors' cabins appear overdesigned, with too many materials, and are anachronistic in a world that is doing away with private offices. Purists would object to a glass building and would have liked shading in the facade to save energy. And though the individual designers have produced compelling works, viewed together, the collection appears to lack some coherence, speaking slightly different languages. But these are minor—and subjective—objections.

The bigger point is that corporate headquarters can remain static or project dynamic energy—it is a strategic choice like any other business decision. Workplaces can be nourishing anchors, sustainable resources, reflective mirrors and storytelling platforms. Or they can be monotonous and dull. If you want to experience why architecture is important to corporate India, pop over to Manesar and look out for a sweeping eagle taking off from a glass building. It might just let your imagination take flight.