

**Designer, botanist and artist Patrick Blanc** has helped celebrate the UAE grand opening of leading department store Robinsons. Recently opened in Al-Futtaim's Dubai Festival City, the new flagship store is said to be one of the UAE's largest, and will treat visitors to the best of John Lewis furniture, cookware, textiles, glassware, and bed, bath and living products.

Spread over three levels, and across approximately 18,600 square metres, this new oasis of inspiration will be the largest department store in the region, home to 90 exclusive fashion and beauty brands, as well as John Lewis home collections, which are available only at Robinsons. That's on top of the large variety of 600 carefully selected international and local labels, including Flamingo & Pineapple, Birds of Paradise, Isine, Mu-so and Astell & Kern.

Founded over 100 years ago, Robinsons has a pioneering spirit that has kept it at the forefront of contemporary fashion. To celebrate the region's local fashion, the company has curated the 'Sultani' exhibition at its luxury rotunda. Until the end of June, visitors can see 18 traditional gowns worn by prominent UAE female figures.

At the unique concept pre-launch event, Blanc partnered with Robinsons to develop the Middle East's first in-store vertical garden. He discussed the details of the event, the wall and the importance of eco-consciousness.

#### **What inspired your creation?**

I'm proud to be associated with a brand which is bringing an eco-friendly consciousness to life as part of its store environment in the Middle East. The concept was inspired by the brand's Singaporean heritage and gives a nod to

Singapore's urban landscapes, meshing art, design and cultural dimensions. The concept of the store's vertical garden is integral to laying the foundations for an environmentally-conscious mindset within the city.

#### **What makes it unique?**

The Vertical Garden, showcased on the exterior façade of Robinsons as well as its interior atrium, extends over three floors, showcasing over 308 species of foliage, many of which will be the first of their kind in the region.

#### **How does it work with the overall interior design of the store?**

The visual merchandising gives a completely new look and feel to the store, and an inspirational experience to its customers. The launch thematic, 'Urban Romance', celebrates the greenery and freshness of fashion – a new urban-green attitude with a nod to the Singaporean heritage of Robinsons.

#### **How does the wall create enthusiasm for eco-consciousness?**

I was fortunate to be able to work with children from the Deira International School and the German International School of Dubai in an interactive session to discuss the benefits of an eco-friendly lifestyle. The latter school was selected based on the recent establishment of the institution's sustainability committee, with a focus on educating students about environmental protection and green living. We talked about the specific plant species that are best suited to the local environment, and the development of the vertical garden. We also indulged in healthy vegan refreshments and snacks. 



Patrick Blanc



Vertical Garden