

# shivangi vasudeva / furniture designer

Dear Only Natural Jury,

My name is Shivangi Vasudeva, and I am a London-based Indian furniture designer. My practice sits at the intersection of design, craft, and culture, guided by a belief in the power of visual and material storytelling. I am drawn to objects that hold memory and carry the weight of lineage.

The piece I am submitting, *Taan*, is a room divider that explores the emotional and physical tensions embedded in making. The word *taan*, meaning “to stretch” or “strain” in Hindi, became a lens through which I examined the structure of weaving, the pressure in preparation, and the quiet labour that transforms material into meaning. Developed in close collaboration with Chillo, a weaver from Nagaland, *Taan* was brought to life on the indigenous loin loom—a minimal and intimate tool, traditionally passed down through generations of women. The divider incorporates handwoven cotton panels, raised embroidery, locally grown cane, and an ashwood frame.

Cane, which grows in abundance in Nagaland, plays an important structural and narrative role in this piece. I’ve used it to break the rhythm of the tapestry and introduce fluidity ; criss-crossed and wrapped using techniques traditionally seen in the handles and weaponry of Naga artefacts. These gestures carry forward the tactile language of the region where function and ritual often merge. I’ve included a video of Chillo at work, as the work is not just a finished object, but a record of shared knowledge, time, and trust.

## **Wood with a Conscience**

Teak, once abundant, is now endangered and often poorly regulated in India. In response, I’ve chosen to work with white ash wood which is not local but responsibly harvested from reserved forests with transparent sourcing. For finishing, I use zero-VOC monocoats that protect both the wood and the people who interact with it.

## **Built Through Collaboration**

In an era of virality and speed, artisans are too often reduced to silent executors. But deep skill, knowledge, and quiet artistry live in their hands. My practice is rooted in collaboration—with weavers, carpenters, and dyers, not just to honour their craft, but to create relationships where their contributions are valued and visible. Together, we create not just objects, but meaning.

## **Making with Intention**

In a country like India, where production is often wired for scale, I choose a slower path. The textiles I work with are 100% handspun cotton, often using surplus yarn from trusted sources like Heirloom Naga. The process is deliberate -not to create exclusivity, but to make room for care. I believe in being approachable and accessible while refusing to participate in systems that rely on underpaid labour or faceless mass production.

## **A Practice for Advocacy**

Behind *Taan* is a larger commitment: to preserve and reimagine endangered craft traditions in contemporary design. In the quiet work of women weavers and artisans whose skills survive in the margins, there is both beauty and urgency. This practice is not just about celebrating craft, it's about advocating for it, ensuring fair value, and giving indigenous knowledge space in today's design discourse. Sustainability, to me, must include not only natural materials but also the human networks of care, heritage, and labour that give them meaning. As a furniture designer, I am committed to exploring new forms grounded in traditional wisdom and material truth.

Thank you for the opportunity. I hope *Taan* resonates with the values this competition celebrates: material integrity, local knowledge, and the beauty of making by hand.

Warm regards,

Shivangi Vasudeva