Contemporary design inspired by heritage

Posted on

Setting for a living area

The old and the new, the classic and the modern come into play in the interiors and furniture items designed by Raux Brothers. Staying true to

the company's beginning as traders and replicators of antiques, their contemporary designs reflect elements of the old.

Words Mamduh Waheed **Photographs** Damith Wickramasinghe

Certain vocations are only pursued by those with a sense of passion and dedication for inherent values as opposed to only exterior manifestations of success. When you enter any of the three showrooms of Raux Brothers in Colombo, you are met with a display that is fresh and inspiring. Constantly changed to bring new combinations of old and new, the antique and modern, the showrooms are an offering to all those seeking ideas to better arrange and decorate their homes and offices, be it interiors or outdoors.

Initially establishing themselves as dealers and replicators of local and international antiques and period furniture, Raux Brothers has come a long way from its beginnings in 1959. Other than three showrooms in the city – the Heritage Gallery on De Fonseka Road, Colombo 5, the Raux Brothers Flagship store on Buller's Road, Colombo 4, and Elements store on R A De Mel Mawatha, Colombo 3 – the company maintains an area that spans100,000 square feet on the outskirts of the city in Piliyandala. The space is utilised for storage, as a workshop space and studio where new ideas are sketched and realised in wood and other materials by technicians,craftsmen and carpenters.

"We archive old pieces which act as inspirations for the new designs we produce. Sometimes we improvise on them and often we include clients' wishes and requirements into the new designs", said Graham Raux, now managing the company with his wife Kalani Raux. Walking through the extensive spaces of the workshop and studio spread over four stories, you realise it is a far cry from the polished and elegantly presented outlets the company maintains in the city. Here, an entire wall serves as a shelf for archived antique chairs, displayed like books in a library. Another side of a whole floor is filled with antique chests, some close to, or over a hundred years old.

On the ground floor of the building, you find carpenters and craftsmen, some chipping away at a piece they have been working on for days. Others replicating an item from a life size sketch made on thin plywood. "It has always been our practice to manually sketch the designs in life size. If it is for a project we are working on with a client, we then send the drawing to the architect or interior designer," explained Graham Raux. Using only a manual design process has come naturally to

him, “because I have literally grown up surrounded by such pieces as we are making here, I can instinctively tell when something is out of proportion. And when we make the drawings manually in life size, it is a fool proof process where the carpenters can produce to perfection what the client is seeking.”

Although supplying furniture for a range of venues including private homes and hotels, the company is not branded as an exclusive furniture store. Keeping true to its origins as traders and replicators of antiques, Raux Brothers is a specialist in providing customized contemporary designs for your interiors. However, you will also find strong traces of colonial style period furniture in the collections presented in the company’s showrooms. The displays are selected and themed around the four letters that make up the word HOME where the four letters stand for four collections that blend into each other and varies to give the distinctiveness of an individual’s choice.

The letters of HOME stand for Heritage, Outdoor, Masters and Elements. While Heritage and Outdoor collections are self explanatory, Masters refers to pieces inspired from the Group’s archives and which combine new designs with the old. Elements, which refers to the last letter in HOME, is the newest addition to the offerings from Raux Brothers. Positioned as an extension of the main brand, Elements offers you the chance to select accessories to complete your interiors. With a range of several hundred in their inventory, all the products in the Elements store are handpicked by Kalani and Graham Raux so that the range reflects the core values of the brand. And without loosing the classical touch of the brand, you are able to integrate modern and contemporary Elements into your homes, outdoors and work spaces.

The Raux Brothers showrooms are meant as spaces to be inspired by, rather than to simply make a purchase and complete the transaction then and there. The staff are trained and eager to understand your needs and requirements and happy to create a more informed selection experience where you will be able to match existing pieces with items on sale. More importantly, you will be able to commission your very own piece, be it a replica of a product that already exists, a design from long ago or something that is a combination of the old and the modern. You do have to be patient though. “Depending on the design, one single piece can take up to several weeks,” explained Graham Raux, completing the tour of the workshop and studio in Piliyandala. “We do not compromise on the quality of a piece and maintain the authenticity of the design inspiration.”

Since Raux Brothers is also presently supplying to several new hotels that are coming up and have furnished full interiors for resort projects overseas, the present storage and workshop spaces are proving inadequate. “We hope to convert part of our workshops into the largest interior showroom in the country where families will be able to come and spend a whole day walking through different sets and combinations. It will be a nice day out, perhaps on weekends with your family. Provisions will be there for children to be looked after with a proper kids play area and other conveniences for families or visiting groups,” concluded Raux on his immediate future plans. Until then, however, there is nothing lacking in terms of ideas and inspiration in the three Raux Brothers’ showrooms already presenting a varied range of options and products.

Flagship Store

137 Bullers Road

Colombo 4

T: + 94 (11) 259 4495

rauxbrothers137@gmail.com

Heritage Gallery

7 De Fonseka Road

Colombo 5

T: +94 (11) 258 3813

rauxbrothers07@gmail.com

Elements

419 R A de Mel Mawatha

Colombo 3

T: 94 (11) 259 4177

rauxbrothers419@gmail.com

rauxbrothers.com

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