Suriya: Traditional designs with a modern twist

Posted on



A display of classically contemporary aesthetics

A cornucopia of exquisite artefacts, furniture and bric-a-brac fill every nook and corner of the store. Each item within its walls is exquisite and has been lovingly crafted to perfection. The deep colours and the eclectic array of articles on display are a feast for the eyes. Specialising in décor

and furnishings, Suriya beckons seekers of collectible odds and ends with its faux antique Ambakke masks or dramatic conversation pieces such as the pekeda coffee tables.

Words Imara de Chickera Photographs Rumesh Perera

Entering Suriya, is like stumbling upon Aladdin's cave of hidden treasures. I want to delve deep and explore and touch the different textures and take in the relaxing fragrance of lemongrass incense sticks and scented candles in every imaginable shape and size. With products ranging from custom made wooden and wrought iron furniture, bright wooden toys, handloom fabric, quaint artefacts and coconut accessories, there is no shortage of things to discover and time slips by unnoticed while I lose myself in it all. This is a one-stop shop for classically contemporary aesthetics. Think oversized pillows, rustic wood coffee tables, vintage glass lanterns and regal beds, swathed in silk.

I am drawn to the Asian-inspired semi-precious jewellery display. What is noteworthy is that the designers work with the natural shape of the stones. This means that the items are one-of-a-kind. Stand-out pieces include a big bold butterfly made out of semi-precious stones, and a chunky necklace made out of geometric blue topaz.

What started off in 1999 as a diversion for a housewife and mother of three sons, with an entrepreneur's heart, has now blossomed into a thriving business locally with a footprint in Los Angeles, California.

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The Suriya concept is to use everything that is 100 percent local and part of the Sri Lankan heritage, and combine it with the contemporary designs. The store is a platform on which to showcase Sri Lanka's rich tradition of design and craftsmanship. It is co-owner and CEO, Ruwanmalie Jayasinghe's vision to revitalise Sri Lankan artistry and create a demand for long-forgotten techniques and secure pride of place for these, even in the most modern of spaces. You will find replicas and spin-offs of antiques; whimsical pieces such as temple painted masks and traditional Ambekke Devale carvings. While reviving the industry Ruwanmalie focuses on creating a high quality product, with beautiful designs, reasonably priced.

The locally made furnishings also put a modern twist on antique-inspired, earthy pieces that mix raw and polished wood with glass for beautifully avant-garde results. The charming collection of home décor such as the comfy bright red sofas and distress painted furniture, add modern panache to any space. While the majority of items are locally sourced, the store features a few handpicked items from the owner's travels, such as the stunning black and white geometrical crystal-base lampshades.

I admired the sleek smooth fluid lines of a king-size bed dressed-up in refreshing cream and green-hued, silk bed linen. All furniture items are made out of reclaimed recycled timber, such as jack. This results in tempered wood that won't warp with time and of course environmental sustainability.

All handicraft items are made from readily available local raw materials.

Suriya also takes on interior design projects and the store's room displays clearly showcase Ruwanmalie's skill. Suriya works with hotel chains in Sri Lanka and the Maldives. She wants to help the booming hospitality industry by meeting these demands, embracing what is made locally and help local artisans in their livelihoods.

Innovative design and perfection is Suriya's trademark, and this boutique has truly garnered an exciting assortment of tasteful home products under one roof. Like its namesake the sun, it is sure to brighten up living spaces of both its local and international customers.

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