

# Suriya: Where Sri Lankan Tradition Meets Contemporary Design

Posted on

Celebrating 25 Years of Artistic Vision and Local Craftsmanship

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A timeless beauty - a graceful swan sculpture.

In 2025, Suriya celebrates an incredible 25-year journey—a milestone built on passion, creativity, and a deep love for Sri Lankan heritage. At the heart of this iconic concept store is Ruwanmali Jayasinghe, its visionary CEO and Managing Director.

Under her leadership, Suriya has grown into a vibrant space that brings together delicate trinkets and elegant furniture, stylish bags and handcrafted crockery, warm candles, and

artisanal pottery, all the way to captivating artwork and statuesque sculptures. Every corner of the store tells a story, making Suriya a true visual treasure trove.

A visit to Suriya is like stepping into a sanctuary of culture and beauty. It's not minimalist—it's soulful and abundant, filled with vintage charm, ethnic character, and artistic energy. Each piece, whether a graceful swan sculpture, a boho-inspired lampshade, or a hand-painted panel, carries harmony and intention. The carefully curated collection invites you to pause, admire, and immerse yourself in the magic of design rooted in tradition.

### **From Humble Beginnings to a Design Empire**

Ruwanmali's story began in the year 2000. What started as a small store offering locally handmade items has now grown into a full-fledged factory producing furniture and décor for homes and offices across Sri Lanka and beyond. Over the years, she has built a business that supports 158 families and preserves age-old cottage industries. But her journey wasn't born purely out of business ambition—it came from the heart. A mother of three boys, Ruwanmali first entered the world of craft through charity work aimed at women's empowerment. She began with crocheted items and hairbands, driven by a desire to help others rather than build a business. Yet her eye for design and her passion for craft slowly blossomed into something much bigger.

Today, Suriya offers over 30,000 unique products across 25 categories, and many of her earliest suppliers still work with her—some now represented by the next generation of artisans.

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Suriya presents lovely handcrafted pieces that elevate and inspire your living spaces.





Crafting an entrance with a story.

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Ruwanmali Jayasinghe, CEO/Managing Director, Suriya.



A whimsical twist to art.





Stylish lampshade bases.

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### **Rooted in Sri Lankan Heritage**

One of Suriya's strongest foundations is its unwavering identity—firmly rooted in Sri Lankan culture. Every item is proudly handcrafted by local artisans, many of whom have been trained and mentored by Ruwanmali herself. Whether it's an antique-style carving from Sabaragamuwa or a colorful door panel painted in traditional temple style, each product represents a blend of timeless craft and contemporary flair.

Through her work, Ruwanmali has tapped into the hidden potential of village artisans,



breathing new life into ancient techniques. A perfect example is temple painting. Once used only for small decorative items, this art form now appears in larger installations—doors, ceilings, panels, and even Pettagama storage boxes—thanks to Ruwanmali's vision. Using natural dyes and traditional methods, these paintings evoke the same mystical ambiance found in ancient Sri Lankan temples.

### **A Collaborative Creative Journey**

For Ruwanmali, design is always a team effort. She works closely with artisans, sketching ideas and refining them until the final product meets her exacting standards. Each piece is a collaboration—a fusion of ideas, skills, and creative exploration. What starts as a simple brainstorming session often becomes an inspired journey that transforms raw materials into one-of-a-kind masterpieces. Her hands-on involvement doesn't stop there. Ruwanmali personally curates every collection and oversees the design direction of the brand. Whether it's a single sculpture or an entire living room set, she ensures each product aligns with her vision: a balance of tradition and modernity.

### **Suriya Goes Global**

In 2008, Suriya took a bold leap onto the international stage with a store opening in California, USA—a little slice of Sri Lanka overseas. It was a challenge, Ruwanmali admits, but one she met with confidence. With high standards, a deep respect for Sri Lankan craftsmanship, and a flair for design, she introduced her homeland's aesthetic to a global audience. This expansion is only the beginning. In the next five years, Ruwanmali hopes to grow Suriya into a global brand, with more stores bringing Sri Lankan heritage to the world.

### **Designing Spaces, Telling Stories**

Every month, Ruwanmali takes on at least three custom design projects—homes, offices, and hotels—giving artisans the chance to create bespoke pieces tailored to each space. Her artists come from across the country, and many are discovered by chance at local art fairs like Kala Pola. Whether they're seasoned professionals or emerging talents, they are given opportunities to grow under her guidance.

Suriya serves both luxury clients and budget-conscious customers, with no compromise on quality. Whether you're shopping for a high-end interior or a simple handcrafted accent, each customer receives the same thoughtful service and attention to detail.

## **From the Skies to Sri Lankan Design**

Before founding Suriya, Ruwanmali spent six years as a member of the flight cabin crew with AIR LANKA. “I’m incredibly proud of my first workplace,” says Ruwanmali, reflecting on her time as a flight cabin crew member – a role she credits with shaping the person she is today. The experience, she explains, instilled in her a strong work ethic, a deep sense of discipline, and the ability to connect with people from all walks of life, embracing multiculturalism and ethnic diversity. “I have immense respect for the foundation AIR LANKA gave me, and I’m certain many of us who shared that journey would wholeheartedly agree.” Her travels exposed her to global architecture and design, shaping her appreciation for aesthetics. Managing people came naturally, and the business skills she needed were instinctively hers. More than anything, she believes humility is what helped her build something truly lasting. Ruwanmali’s 24 years of success in business is a result of her driven vision, deep product knowledge, boldness in decision-making to continuously improve the business unshakeable consistency, and the long-term relationships she has built with her artisans and customers.

## **A Labor of Love**

For Ruwanmali, every project is personal. Each crafted item reflects her journey, her values, and her commitment to preserving Sri Lanka’s artistic heritage. Suriya is more than a store—it’s a movement, a tribute to tradition, and a living gallery of beauty, community, and creativity.

As Suriya marks 25 years, it stands as a shining example of what can happen when vision, heart, and heritage come together.

*Suriya*

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*Opening Hours: Monday to Saturday 10am – 7pm, Sunday closed*



Ruwanmali's personal touch is reflected in every arrangement.



A beautifully carved horse stands in a delicate tottering pose.





Fierce beauty delicately drawn in pencil.



Beauty of porcelain enriched by the elegance of Sinhala alphabet.





Circlism art technique of Marilyn Monroe as never seen before.



Every decor is a vivid storyteller, weaving tales of artistry and timeless tradition that resonate deeply.



A beautiful spin to every corner.