

home review

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a modern odyssey
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Abaca

Abaca is possibly one of the few retail establishments in the country that cater to furniture made from an ensemble of rattan, bamboo, abaca fibre, cane, sea grass and other natural materials of a similar kin. The store communicates with a distinctive flavour that is organic and sustainable with a variety of products that include furniture, home furnishings and décor pieces like lamps, planters, mirrors and wall art. Abaca living, having carved a niche for itself in the furniture arena, has introduced its latest collection of handcrafted furniture, décor accessories and textiles this festive season. Its stylish new collection highlights the beauty of hand crafted pieces and stays true to its core ideology of natural, organic and sustainable creations.

Spearheaded by Rashida Baker Asrani, Director of Abaca, and a veteran in the world of interiors, Abaca has forged key partnerships both globally and locally to drive forward its collection for 2009. An exciting new partnership forged by Abaca has been with Debbie Palao, a furniture designer from the Philippines. Debbie Palao of the





firm creates pieces of furniture experimenting with natural materials and its hidden beauty. Debbie Palao, a hands-on designer who forever is trying to push the envelope with her design skills and innovation, uses a variety of natural materials like bamboo, leaves, rattan, abacca etc. for her distinctive creations.

Widely travelled and with an interest in exploring different cultures, Debbie likes to draw her inspirations from a variety of sources. 'I have been influenced by cultures from across the world and have no doubt that coming to India and experiencing the variety of crafts here will inspire me in the future'

Choosing to use indigenous materials, Debbie acknowledges that natural materials do have some constraints, but the joy of creating lies in working around these concerns and showcasing the beauty of nature. Debbie is very passionate about the design process and is equally passionate to transfer her design ideas into built form. With her hand woven products, Debbie is forever experimenting with form and developing new ways of manipulating the weave, pushing the boundaries of her creativity.



Using water based lacquers and coatings, Debbie ensures that her creations stay true to ecological concerns and is also keen to develop a new cashew-nut resin base that is biodegradable. Inspired by designers like Zaha Hadid, Debbie relates to the challenges that these masters go through to perfect their designs. Commenting on issues of moisture and longevity of her products she explains that her products undergo a significant testing process that include a freezing test and a heat test, with a manufacturing process that's been fine tuned over a period of 18 years she points out that her products are built to last and to delight for years to come.

Abaca has also partnered with designer Varsha Sharma of Anek Taanka from Ahmedabad. Varsha, a graduate of NID, has created an exclusive collection of bedspreads, cushions and runners for Abaca. With a quest to promote the crafts as well as provide economic independence to the socially underprivileged, Abaca has launched the Self Help Center in Mumbai, along with Sadhana Seva Mandir, Udaipur and Zeenat Engineer. Using a range of natural, vegetable and azo-free dyes, Abaca has introduced a collection of bed and table linen using modern graphics applied to traditional Indian embroidery techniques especially produced by the women in Mumbai, Kutch and Rajasthan.

