

Treasure in The Attic

Driftwood spawns a thriving business in the industrial area of Al Quoz



Pictures: Supplied



✦ The store houses everything from original antique pieces, reclaimed wood products, and carved and painted furniture

By Cheryl Robertson
Special to PW

For Dubai's ever burgeoning residential population, furniture outlets in the emirate offer everything from budget to designer furniture. The Attic is one such store set up by an independent furniture supplier, a place of intrigue that houses unique hand-picked pieces from India made from recycled wood, metal or a combination of both. You will find here original antique pieces, reclaimed wood products, carved and painted furniture and chic industrial products, all stored in a warehouse in the Al Quoz Industrial area.

The business was born after a piece of driftwood was transformed into a table, according to owner Inder Singh (36), originally from Delhi. He designed a coffee table and asked a local carpenter to make it for him. "It had simple clean lines with added metal and looked very different to what you currently find in the market," says Singh.

A friend was impressed with the creation and asked if he could order one just like it. "That was my eureka moment," says the Dubai resident of 13 years.

Inspired by the notion of recycling, refurbishing and reusing, Singh went

on a discovery trip to India, walking through Gujarat and Rajasthan, sourcing items from village craftspeople and informal auctions, picking out exactly what he felt would fit the model.

Products

Currently available products include unicycle consoles, colourful Manji seats (long low benches) made of recycled textiles and three-drawer rustic chests emblazoned with French writing in metal and

mango wood. Blemishes and uneven design work that arise from time to time enhances each piece's individuality, he says. "Ours is not the Maharaja's furniture, but it's also not plywood. It is solid wood and reasonably priced."

He favours mango over the more expensive rosewood. Singh has also infused new life into redundant truck and tractor parts, creating unusual custom-made items that cannot be replicated elsewhere. He has links with selected workshops in the UAE where orders are created according to client specifications.

"We feel that there is a larger custom order market over here," says Singh. "We operate a fixed price policy because we know it is good value. Our prices are such that people just snap them up. We don't want to offer something that people cannot afford to buy."

Expansion plans

Singh came to Dubai to work as a banker, moved into ship trading and then oil trading where he has been for the past seven years. He slowly developed the business via word of mouth and social media, establishing it as an online marketplace although the warehouse is open for customer viewing. "The business has gone a bit



"The business has gone a bit ballistic but we are enjoying the ride."

Inder Singh
Owner, The Attic



ballistic but we are enjoying the ride," he says, adding that it will no longer be a one-man band as his wife Rasleen will run it full-time from December.

Orders come from Saudi, Bahrain, Hong Kong, France and other parts of Europe. "Although it's great to have orders from so far away, sometimes the logistics don't work out — it is not worth the shipping costs."

The company plans to export more and has an opportunity to open up in Oxford, UK, in March next year. "We are still exploring options as the UK is very different, the weather affects the wood," he says. "You have to be careful about what you are trying to bring into a market."

He hopes to also start procuring furniture from Zanzibar, South Africa, Zimbabwe and Mexico. The Attic will be exhibiting some wares at Al Serkal Avenue's A4 Space on November 15 for a week. ■



✦ Al Quoz warehouse open
Saturday 10am to 2pm;
Sunday 10am to 4pm
www.theattic-dubai.com

This section features lesser-known places and events that are delightfully distinct in their own way. It could be a quaint little café or simply a charming lake. If it's got character and brings a smile to your face, it's a hidden gem that will find a place on this page. If you know of a hidden gem, email the Editor at enag@gulfnews.com.