

Arawak Interiors

Contributed by Traci O'Dea
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Opens Showroom and Warehouse at Road Reef Plaza - When Roy Keegan of Arawak Interiors tells me he just got in a shipment of synthetic rattan furniture, I imagine the brightly coloured chairs and noisy sunset crowds at the outdoor cafes in Nice, France, but when I enter the Arawak warehouse in Road Reef Plaza, I'm surrounded instead by the muted earth tones and contemporary shapes of Arawak's line of all-weather furniture. Stacks of chairs, stools and side tables line the walls, interspersed with mirrors, lamps and decorative sculptures. "All the rattan is weatherproof," he says, "suitable for snow at ski resorts or direct sun. They're fadeproof, too."

I'm drawn to a slate-coloured Orbit chair—an oversized round divan that comes with its own retractable shade. If I had that chair, I would never leave it. I would live in it. I would abandon my job and friends and become a hermit. Or a hermit crab in my own little shell. With nothing but books and grapes and pillows allowed inside. That chair is dangerous. I don't sit in it. I wouldn't get up.

Perhaps sensing my hypnosis and not wanting a new resident in his warehouse, Roy leads me to the showroom a few doors down on Waterfront Drive. Almost as tempting as the Orbit chair is the Daydream Lounger—an outdoor daybed in tan synthetic rattan with four posts and a canopy with curtains that unfurl to block the wind or sun or peeping neighbours. Young Gabi Fox, resembling a genie in a bottle among the cushions, reads a fairytale while her mom peruses the furniture.

Beside the daybed, a corner chair with boxy arms misleads me into thinking it won't be comfortable, but I end up sitting in it for a while taking notes. All the cushions for the outdoor furniture are covered in Sunbrella fabric—a weatherproof and sunproof trademarked material. The corner chair, an impressive piece on its own, can also be made into a sectional with additional pieces.

A glass-topped dining table and four dining chairs in the front of the showroom sport a gorgeous pebble colour, which I later learn is called Cappuccino. I can imagine mixing and matching the different rattans—a Java Brown table with Cappuccino chairs and Bronze accent tables. I pull out one of the chairs—it's lightweight but sturdy—and lean back. Once again, I'm surprised at the comfort of the furniture, especially since dining room chairs tend to be stiff. These invite lingering and after-dinner conversation. And maybe a second bottle of wine.

I resist two chaise longues that beg me to put up my feet and instead wander over to the funkier Salsa Range of synthetic rattan furniture. The curvy arms remind me of a Dali painting, and the plump, trippy cushions heighten the effect.

"The idea is to have the warehouse fully stocked so we could do a whole house at once," Roy says. "He's off to Bali next month to buy more stock. We've been doing so many private homes that no one has really seen what we could do until now. We'd get furniture in and deliver it directly to the customer." He then mentions that the price of the furniture includes delivery and installation.

All Arawak's synthetic rattan furniture can be custom ordered in many different shades. Roy shows me colour swatches, and I'm pleased to see yellow and magenta amongst the coffee-coloured hues. So replicating those crowded, bright and noisy French cafes is always an option.

Arawak Interiors is open Monday to Saturday 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.