

Wisteria is one of several new home design shops opening in Houston

Diane Cowen Oct. 21, 2019



The Off White showroom, which also houses Rainey Richardson Interior Design, at the Houston Design Center is being rebranded RR Home and will shift from a trade only shop to being open to the public.

Photo: RR Home

Online shopping has forever changed the retail landscape, but it hasn't stopped home design stores from opening, and it is even making trade-only showrooms available to the general public.

In recent months, a handful of shops have opened, rebranded or expanded. The new Wisteria store on West Alabama is sure to be swamped with shoppers at its Nov. 1 opening, and Avant

Garden at River Oaks District and Etel have both been well-received with their recent openings.

RR Home — previously the trade-only Off White Furniture showroom at the Houston Design Center — has been rebranded and is now open to retail customers, while Tazi & Co. Interiors is the new name for showroom/design studio Brown Interiors in Pearland.

Together, they're giving Houston-area shoppers more options for buying home décor.

Wisteria

If you love shopping the Wisteria catalog and website, your holiday wish has just come true: The brand is opening a store here on Nov. 1 at 3461 W. Alabama.

Wisteria was founded in 2000 as a catalog business by Shannon and Andrew Newsom of Dallas, opening 10 years later as a bricks-and-mortar store there. UK-based OKA Direct Ltd. purchased Wisteria in 2018, and the new, 9,000-square-foot Houston store, designed by Murphy Mears Architects, is its first outside of Dallas.

The Newsoms' world travels inspired the start of their home-décor business and initially featured things they found everywhere they went, supporting artisans and their communities. In-house product design began in 2006, but Wisteria's goods remain globally inspired. Current examples include a Vietnamese reactive glaze round stool or burl wood cylinder side table or hand-painted Chinese blue and white porcelain.

When Houston's store opens, it will have Wisteria's standard fare — furniture, home accessories and art — but will also be ready for the holidays, with goods for gift giving or party hosting.

You'll find themed areas devoted to categories of home goods: decorative pillows, stools, side tables and mirrors, a central "greenhouse" with a skylight. That space will feel like the outdoors with sunlight, blue skies and greenery, and it will be used for special events such as designer showcases, trunk shows, how-to presentations and celebrity visits.

Holiday décor ranges from stockings, tree skirts and table runners made of red felt and covered in snowball-like white poms, snowflake ornaments or cute little mice that make up a trio of angles or Nativity set. There are plenty of things with delicate embroidery, including cocktail napkins and linen tea towels.

Details: 3461 W. Alabama; open 10 a.m.- 6 p.m. Monday-Tuesday and Thursday-Saturday, 10 a.m.-8 p.m. Wednesday, and noon-4 p.m. Sunday; wisteria.com

RR Home

After three years as a design studio and showroom, Off White Furniture at the Houston Design Center is rebranding itself for a new market, with a new look and a new name: RR Home. Tom and Rainey Richardson's shop is no longer a trade-only venture, welcoming walk-in retail consumers interested in new furnishings for any home.

The 4,500-square-foot showroom — which also houses Rainey Richardson Interiors design studio — was once filled with furniture all covered in the same off-white fabric, so you could see the furniture in its most basic form and then select upholstery for semicustom projects. Some of that still exists, but the showroom has gone through big changes, with furniture grouped in vignettes in different color schemes.

On a recent day, a green velvet sofa with complementary print chairs sat near the front window, and a few feet away a grouping bathed in shades of blue was arranged in front of a wall painted Farrow & Ball's deeply saturated Scotch Blue.

The rapidly changing market, including online shopping, has given homeowners things they didn't used to have access to, said Tom Richardson.

"There's a large market of people out there who might not need us to come in and do their entire home," he said. "They need a couple of pieces, and this helps us reach that market. They can bring in plans or room dimensions, and we can do some space planning for them."

Details: at the Houston Design Center, 7026 Old Katy Road, Suite 153; open 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday-Friday, Saturdays by appointment; 713-637-4883 or sales@rrhome.com; rrhome.com

Avant Garden

It's raining flowers and disco balls at Avant Garden at ROD — the newest effort from Todd Fiscus of the Dallas-based [Todd Events](#).

The Flower Rain Room and Bring the House Down Room in his flower/luxury home-goods shop in the River Oaks District are spaces reserved for nothing but fun. They're both glamorous Instagram photo opportunities, collaborations with Motus Red Photobooth. The Motus camera counts down from 10, then snaps your photo or gives you a superquick GIF that is emailed straight to you at no charge. (My recommendation: Ham it up and go for the GIF, they're infinitely more fun.)

Fiscus opened Todd Events in Dallas 25 years ago, followed by his [Avant Garden](#) in 2001. His 2013 marriage to Ceron — owner of [Ceron Hair Studio](#) in Houston and a fixture on the city's social scene — gave him a stake in this city, too.

This new Houston installation is filled with potted plants and floral arrangements you can buy on the spot or have made, plus seasonal décor and luxury home goods. Event-design clientele can meet with staff at the site, too.

Flowers and plants are front and center here, and their arrangements are unlike anything you'll see in most shops. They might place delicate flowers in the nooks and crannies of sea coral or let a variety of flowers in blues, oranges and pinks drip from the sides of a chinoiserie jar.

If cut flowers aren't your thing, visit the orchid bar, where you select a vase and orchid and let them pretty it up for you (\$90 and up). Their ready-made terrariums take succulents to a new level with the addition of driftwood, geodes and alligator scales (\$150-\$775).

Home luxury goods include stationery from Dallas-based Bell'Invito Stationers, from cute notecards to a smile-worthy ruler plated in 24-karat gold (\$115) and Haas Brothers' quirky and highly collectible ceramic objets d'art. No lineup of home goods is complete without candles, and Avant Garden at ROD carries floral scented Carrière Frères (\$50-\$55) and the more masculine Lumira (\$75).

Details: at River Oaks District, 4444 Westheimer.

Tazi & Co. Interiors

Shazia Kirmani was the lead designer at Brown Interiors in Pearland when she bought the operational side of the business and renamed it Tazi & Co. Interiors. Now with a staff of eight, a 6,000-square-foot showroom and another 3,000 square feet of showroom space, Kirmani is finding new ways to bring design services to the masses.

Aware that many are intimidated by the idea of hiring a designer and paying design fees, Kirmani set up different ways to help people, such as \$75-an-hour consultations for people who've already picked things out for a remodeling project. A \$1,500 Design to You package offers a set room design charge; if you don't like the design, you get your money back.

Kirmani's showroom includes furniture brands such as Bernhardt, Hooker, Universal, Sam Moore and Lexington and lighting brands such as Savoy House, Visual Comfort and Arteriors. She also carries Thermador products and has a functioning kitchen on-site.

Details: 2645 E. Broadway, Pearland; open 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday-Friday and noon-5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday; 281-412-5305; taziinteriors.com

Etel

Friends and native Brazilians Angelica Nechar and Caroline Tonisi have brought a new furniture brand to Houston with Etel, the shop they opened in late September in the Shops at Arrive (formerly West Ave). Etel is both the name of their shop and the brand they carry, and they've stocked their 1,100-square-foot shop with its most iconic and collective pieces.

Nechar spent most of her career as a corporate lawyer working abroad, and Tonisi was a CFO in the oil and gas industry. Tired of the corporate world, they talked about what they might do together and Tonisi mentioned the beautiful Etel furniture she saw in the home of a friend in Brazil. She also knew that it wasn't available in Houston.

Etel was founded by Etel Carmona in Sao Paulo, Brazil, using pau ferro, a sustainable wood also known as Brazilian rosewood. The furnishings otherwise are available only in Miami and New York in the U.S.

Familiar pieces include licensed designs by modernist designer Oscar Niemeyer — his sleek Alta lounge chair and ottoman and his curvy Marquesa Bench. Jorge Zalszupin's JZ Tea Trolley will make you want to sit for afternoon tea or set up a bar cart for an at-home happy hour. Zalszupin's bentwood Pétalas Coffee Table is also on display, a piece that comes in smaller and larger versions.

Details: at The Shops at Arrive (formerly West Ave), 2800 Kirby, Suite B112; open 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Monday-Friday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday by appointment.

The Shops at Ladco

The Ladco footprint in the Upper Washington Corridor design district has more than doubled with the opening of The Shops at Ladco on Washington. (The original Ladco building is next door, and the two are now connected by a bridge.)

The Shops — open to the trade only — take up 66,000 square feet of what once was an A&P Supermarket distribution warehouse. The showroom space features luxury brands such as Baker, McGuider and Century and European outdoor brands such as EGO Paris and Varaschin. New tenants include Pomegranit + ADR, Vision Wood, Wilbanks & Makay and The Frankel Building Group.

Details: 7800 and 7900 Washington; 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday-Friday; ladcodesigncenter.com/

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