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Cleveland interior designers offer advice without the 'boutique attitude'

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Lisa DeJong, The Plain Dealer

This chair and ottoman are available at Wine & Design. SoBe, a dog owned by store owner Greg Morris, is the store's mascot.

By Kim Crow

For us Average Joes and Josephines, the thought of hiring a decorator can be a little intimidating.

Evidence of the importance of interior design is all around us - entire TV networks have sprung up to support the idea in the past decade, for goodness' sake -- but *wanting* an attractive, cozy home does not always translate into *knowing* how to achieve it.

"I can pick out my clothes perfectly well, but when it

comes to picking out a chair or a couch, I just freeze up," admits Kristen Powell, 33, an insurance adjuster who lives in Cleveland's Larchmere neighborhood. "It's just such a big expenditure -- and it's not as easy to hide an ottoman in the back of the closet."

But Powell says she's never considered hiring an interior designer.

"It just seems sort of outside my budget, you know? That's something that people with giant houses who can afford \$1,000 curtains do, not me," she says with a smile.

It's exactly that kind of perception that a new breed of interior designers are hoping to combat. A handful of new home furnishing stores in the city of Cleveland have popped up that offer interior design services along with the usual scented candles and picture frames. Like-minded shops can be found across the region, but newer stores such as **Wine & Design** in Tremont and **Duo Home** in Gordon Square have joined longtime downtown stalwart Surroundings Home Decor in the Warehouse District in capturing the urban-chic market.



Lisa DeJong, The PD

These glass designs reflect even more light when placed on a mirrored table. They can be found at DuoHome

"Our goal has been to go against the stereotype of what people think an interior designer is," says Tim Kempf, co-owner of DuoHome in **Cleveland's Gordon Square neighborhood**. "The stereotype is that it is this fussy, expensive dictator rushing around, pushing you to spend thousands on custom upholstery. We're happy to work with big budgets, of course. Who wouldn't love that? But we're all about good design at good prices."

It was that same mind-set that Greg Morris embraced when he opened Wine & Design in **Tremont** in November 2009 in the first floor of a building he and his partner, Dan Rosend, spent months renovating into

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in the Gordon Square Arts District.

building ne and nis partner, Dan Kensei, spent months renovating into the ideal live/work property.

"We're really trying to remove the intimidation factor of interior design," says Morris. "It doesn't have to cost a lot to have a professional guiding your choices. We can work with any budget. "

As Powell, the insurance adjuster, puts it, "I really just want someone to tell me what to do, if this polka-dot chair I think is so fun now will look silly in 10 years. I don't need a showplace, just a cool-looking apartment. Oh, and I need to know if painting a wall black is a really bad idea, too."

Wine & Design Powell is exactly the kind of client Morris had in mind when he began dreaming of a retail space. The longtime interior designer wanted a showroom of sorts in which everything was affordable and available and exemplified his ideals of accessible design.

"We're kind of a one-stop shop," he says of his store, which packs high style into a compact space. "You can dash in and ask our opinion on anything from paint colors to throw pillows, look through our design books, or just buy a gift or a bottle of wine."

Oh yes, the "wine" in the title of the shop is something the owners take quite seriously. The well-traveled Morris and Rensel are ardent wine lovers, and knew that vino would have to play a part in whatever retail venture they came up with.

"We've just learned a lot about wine over the years, and we wanted to share that. Wine is another area that has this perception of being snobby and intimidating, but for us, it's a way of life, completely intertwined with the way we live," says Morris.

Along with a nicely edited selection of reds, whites, roses and sparkling wines, Wine & Design offers a terrific assortment of related home furnishings. From unusual cheeseboards to corkscrews to cool wine glasses with chalkboard bases (perfect for tastings or to just label which drink is yours), any hostess gift requirements are easily filled here.

"Wine brings people together," says Morris simply.

To that end, Wine & Design hosts monthly wine tastings that include accompanying appetizers for only \$10 per person. Sipping and shopping is encouraged here, among items such as Archipelago Botanicals candles and body-care items, Cucina home supplies and a selection of sustainable gift items from area artists.

"We meet with our interior design clients here, to get a sense of what they respond to, then we go into their homes to really get to know them," says Morris. "The whole process is designed to put people at ease. We're bringing hard-to-find, unique furnishings to Cleveland in a way that won't break the bank."

Duo Home DuoHome opened in November 2007, but Kempf and co-owner Scott Suskowicz nearly doubled the store's footprint by taking over a neighboring storefront earlier this summer. The expansion allows them to better display their sleek furniture selection and better share their design sensibilities with their clients in the chic 1,600-square-foot space.

"When we were crammed into a smaller space, the furniture seemed more like props than something you could actually buy," explains Suskowicz. "It seemed more like our emphasis was home furnishings when, in reality, we offer complete design services. That's the engine that drives us."

And what a ride it is. DuoHome's offerings may have always been available for order, but the drama of seeing a dozen striking Nuevo pendant lights and the sleek silhouettes from Younger Furniture is much more inclined to inspire the casual browser.

Contemporary stylings sit next to rustic pieces by Freddy Hill, a Cleveland-based artist who creates them from reclaimed wood from specific places in the city. Gift items are still plentiful, from cute cards to vases to glass platters, all "priced to impress, not depress," chuckles Kempf.

"We offer beautiful shopping without the beautiful attitude," he says. "Come in, have a drink, look

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Lisa DeJong,
The PD

Unique chandeliers found at DuoHome are typical of items that can be worked into a decor by trained designers.

"we offer boutique shopping without the boutique attitude," he says. "Come in, have a drink, look through our design library and let's start talking about your space."

DETAILS

Wine & Design

Where: 751 Starkweather Ave., Cleveland.

Contact: 216-781-8000, wineanddesign.net.

Hours: Noon to 7 p.m. Wednesday through Friday; 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday; 11 a.m.-3 p.m. Sunday; Mondays and Tuesdays by appointment.

DuoHome

Where: 6507 Detroit Ave., Cleveland.

Contact: 216-651-4411; duohome.com.

Hours: 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday; closed Sunday and Monday; other hours available by appointment.

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aspen12

August 26, 2010 at 10:06AM

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An article about Cleveland designers, and not one mention of Barrie Spang of Lee Meier. By far one of the best without the "boutique attitude".

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Becky_Berlekamp Kraner_715

August 26, 2010 at 8:37PM

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I hired Greg Morris to help me build a home. I had never hired a designer before because I thought it would be a huge expense. I know I saved money in the long run by not making mistakes or wasting time along the way. My favorite part of working with Greg was his subtle guidance. I know what I like, but he would gently guide me in the right direction. When the project was completed I felt like it was my vision, only better.

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spidey9



August 26, 2010 at 9:06PM

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As a wallcovering installer for 30 years. I've worked with MANY designers. Some good & some just self proclaimed.... Working with Tim & Scott at DuoHome is always a pleasure. I like their sense of styles. They're easy going with a "let's see what you've got to work with first " attitude and not pushy. They carry some great lines in their store & anyone I've ever recommended to them has come away with a great experience in using a designer. It always makes me look good! Good article guys !






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