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OPEN HOUSE

REAL ESTATE & HOME DESIGN IN THE AREA

What's In Store: Showroom 1412

Collaboration and curation abound at local designer Lori Graham's new showroom on 14th Street, opening tomorrow. **By Kathleen Bridges**



The building's first floor contains 1,700 feet of showroom space. All photographs by Sherry Moeller.

June 28, 2012

Rooms by quick-talking interior designer **Lori Graham** are instantly recognizable for their thoughtful intermingling of contemporary art, worldly artifacts, and timeless vintage pieces, whirled together into what Graham has deemed her “signature mix.” With the opening of her new showroom and design studio near DC’s Logan Circle, Graham is pulling back the curtain to reveal the two creatives she’s long been relying on to make such a mix come to life: gallery curator **Lauren Gentile** of **Contemporary Wing**, and midcentury furniture dealer **Mike Johnson** of Sixteen Fifty Nine by MRJ. The three collaborators have finally set up shop under one roof: Showroom 1412, an innovative one-stop design center that offers custom furniture, vintage pieces, contemporary art, and interior design services.

“We’ve worked together for years; we just decided to build four walls around it,” says Gentile, formerly the director of Irvine Contemporary, the gallery that occupied the 1412 address until last year. Gentile had long been Graham’s go-to source for emerging and contemporary art; Johnson’s Georgetown boutique, which he closed last year before joining Graham’s design team, was her favorite spot for all things midcentury modern. Starting tomorrow, clients and customers will be able to experience them together—along with Graham’s custom furniture line, **LG Place**—in the inspirational vignettes displayed in the 1,700-square-foot showroom.



Graham’s “signature mix” is on display in the many vignettes that center on a rotating display of emerging and contemporary art.



Furniture by Shine by SHO rests beneath Contemporary Wing-curated pieces.

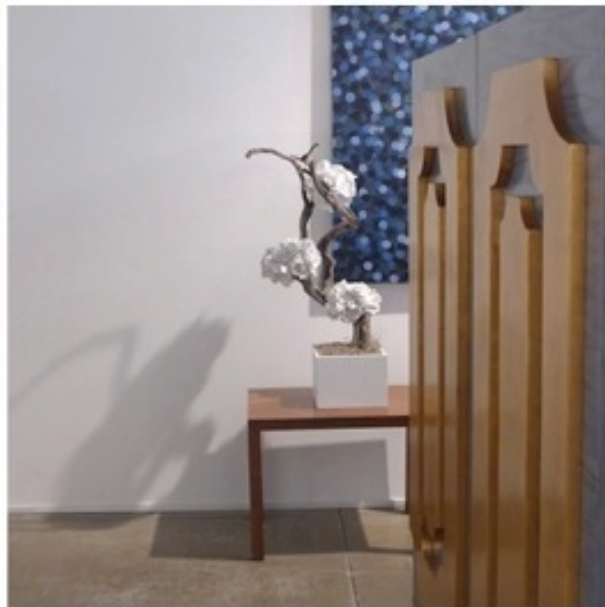
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And that's just the first floor. Climb the stairs and you'll find a meticulously designed office suite bedecked in Graham's signature gray walls and trademark mix of jaw-dropping art and meaningful accessories and furnishings. "Clients can come up here to get inspired and then go downstairs to select pieces for their own spaces," says **Kristy Byrd**, the design firm's managing director. "Especially in a busy metropolitan area like this, it's great that clients can come to this one address and take care of a whole host of needs."

"All we need now is a psychologist on staff," Gentile jokes. "Or maybe a bartender?"



A sliding "barn door" can be moved to change the feel of the showroom space.



A few of the midcentury pieces currently on offer from Sixteen Fifty Nine by MRJ.

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Gentile says members of the art world who had frequented Irvine Contemporary (and Fusebox before that) will be shocked by the transformation of the space. “Before, it was just a big white cube,” she says. Graham kept the gallery’s rotating walls and its sliding racks but employed a floor-to-ceiling facelift to reveal the building’s antique brick walls, and installed an enormous shelving unit with custom mirror inlay. Graham’s custom pieces mingle with lighting by Ochre, furniture by Shine by SHO, vintage pieces sourced by Johnson, and a rotating collection of art curated by Gentile.

“We’re creating environments. You’re not just coming to see a painting in a blank gallery, or to look at design and furniture in a place where you’d normally see it,” says Gentile. “We’re recontextualizing how you experience all of these different components and creating a space for people to see them in a new light.”

That being said, Gentile wants you to know she and her partners don’t take themselves too seriously: “It’s really a comfortable place. There are, like, 700 chairs in here—come and hang out!”

1412 14th St., NW; 202-745-0118; showroom1412.com. Open Monday through Saturday, 11 to 6.

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