

Personal Shopper



THIS ISSUE, WE SENT PERSONAL SHOPPER CAROLINE TO THE GREATER DUBLIN AREA TO CHECK OUT THE VARIETY OF INTERIORS STORES AROUND THE CAPITAL

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ROWELL DESIGN Interiors and Lifestyle

1 The Crescent, Donnybrook Road, Donnybrook, Dublin 4, 01 551 6912, Rowelldesign.ie

Where's it at? A new store that also offers a full interior design consultancy, in the heart of Donnybrook, opposite Kiely's pub. Parking is available beside the shop.

What to expect: Having worked with his mother Bronach Rowell in Harriet's House in Dawson St, providing an interior design service for 20 years, Cormac Rowell has just opened his own store specialising in classic and contemporary design. The 1,200-sq-ft store is the size of a showroom but the emphasis is on a boutique-style experience, displaying affordable, luxury and design-led furnishings and accessories. Every room is catered for, including kitchens and bathrooms. Cormac sources pieces from Ireland, where possible and also throughout Europe. Leading brands stocked include Zoffany, Colefax and Fowler; Manuel Canovas, Brian Yates and Chase Erwin. Cormac has exclusivity on many brands, particularly in lighting, seating and artwork.

Highlights: Cormac's aim is to offer something different and to think outside the box when it comes to advice on interior design solutions to customers. Framed textured fabrics, for example, often provide the perfect finishing touches to a scheme. As well as sofas, headboards and other large items of furniture, there are plenty of quirky feature pieces in-store that are sure to be conversation points.

Best buys: A large ceramic oval paisley table lamp, €149, and for those who like a vintage vibe, retro floor lamps at €195. Chrome silver stem lamps cost just €98, and there is also a large collection of animal artworks, including cows and dogs, in vibrant hues and on large canvasses, priced from €98 to €295.



THE BLUE DOOR House and Garden

The Crescent, Monkstown, Co Dublin

01 230 1894, info@thebluedoor.ie, www.thebluedoor.ie

Where's it at? Set in the chic coastal south Co Dublin suburb of Monkstown, this emporium celebrates Scandi chic, and is a good spot for coffee, lunch and relaxed shopping.

What to expect: An inviting independent interiors store with an array of soft furnishings and gifts sourced throughout Europe, but mainly in Scandinavia, which is renowned for its streamlined style. The team has years of experience of working with fabric and colour coordination. Window dressings, curtains and blinds, are a specialty, with lots of help on hand for selecting fabrics. Free swatches and a full measuring and fitting service are available. If your living space is in need of a facelift, there are cushions, throws and oil cloths in vibrant hues as well as classic shades. Gift dilemmas can be easily solved by opting for a piece from the range of ceramics, planters, Swedish woollen throws, birdhouses and clocks. You can also shop online if you can't make it to the store.

Highlights: Free fabric and oilcloth swatches can be ordered online.

Best buys: A Venetian blind brush that cleans four fins at a time (€14); wipeable Swedish oilcloth tablecloths (from €68), and coloured cottage bird feeders that cleverly convert into nesting boxes (€59).



RUA

55 Capel Street, Dublin 1, 01 874 8051, Ruaboutique.ie

Where's it at? Situated on buzzy and historic Capel Street, the building was previously occupied solely by the Dublin Furniture Centre. Now that firm and Rua Dublin operate side-by-side behind this beautiful traditional shopfront with its large windows. Creating winning window displays is a priority for owner and visual merchandiser Cara Coleman. The boutique-style shop specialises in interior and fashion accessories.

What to expect: Cara Coleman and her fiancé James have put their years of retail experience to good use, giving full vent to their creative flair in a store designed to facilitate browsing. The eclectic product line-up was devised to surprise and delight. Leading Irish Suppliers and Designers such as Island Living are showcased, as are two ranges of jewellery, handmade in Dublin. Retro, shabby chic and a touch of the contemporary sit side by side here, and Cara and James inject new life into tired old furniture by upcycling them using Annie Sloan Chalk paints and products which are available to buy at Rua. This adds to the artisan style of the shop.

Highlights: If you're on the lookout for something different, Rua is the exclusive stockist of American brand Thomas Paul in both Ireland and the UK. The Thomas Paul range of hand-crafted cushions and accessories, are a unique treat. The Madame Chalet collection of accessories, exclusive to Rua in Ireland, is another big draw.

Best buys: Fox and owl cushions, €19; enamel mugs, €6.50, and a jewellery wardrobe, €39.

THE CONSTANT KNITTER

88 Francis Street, Dublin 8, 087 996 7197, Theconstantknitter.ie

Where's it at? On Francis Street, renowned for its antique shops and art galleries, in the heart of The Liberties. Just two doors down from the biggest Oxfam Home in Ireland. Although it has only been open for a year-and-a-half, The Constant Knitter, Rosemary Murphy's much-loved shop is already attracting a buzz, and Irish Times readers voted it one of the 12 best shops in Ireland last year.

What to expect: The shop stocks brands such as Studio Donegal, Cushendale, Artesano, King Cole, Schoppel-Wolle, Lang, Katia, Rico, West Yorkshire Spinners and Drops.

Rosemary, a veteran knitter, has also introduced the HiyaHiya brand of knitting needles and also carries a vast range of accessories. With the revival of knitting, sewing and other crafts, there's always a friendly buzz here. There is also an online shop.

Highlights: The 500-sq-ft light-flooded studio, classroom and chill out area upstairs is an inspiring space, often rented out to craft teachers. The weekly knitting, crochet, sewing and felting classes are very popular. There are also weekend workshops in all of the above plus embroidery, Irish Crochet Lace and various other crafts as they take our fancy. Crafts camps for kids, including sewing and knitting, take place throughout the summer.

Best buys: The HiyaHiya knitting needles, which come in interchangeable, fixed circulars and double-pointed needles, are made of stainless steel or bamboo, priced from just €5. A joy to use, the interchangeable sets contain tips of various sizes with keyless screw-on connections and swivel cables of varying lengths and are presented in a decorative brocade case.



LOST WEEKEND

2 Helen's Court, Georges Street Lower, Dun Laoghaire, Co Dublin, 01 214 0711, Lostweekend.ie

Where's it at? An interior design studio and design store, Lost Weekend is at the Monkstown end of Dun Laoghaire, two minutes from the DART station and near Dun Laoghaire library. The specialty store has an ever-changing offering of contemporary furniture, lighting and fabrics from the superstars of the design world. A carefully sourced collection of vintage pieces is also on display. The primary focus on innovative and bespoke interior designs for discerning clients.

What to expect: Passionate about supporting designers and originality, the team at Lost Weekend goes to great lengths to source and supply desirable designs, often exclusive to the store in Ireland. Interior designers for private and commercial clients, the team skillfully creates lasting interiors schemes with the needs and tastes of clients in mind. Lost Weekend is particularly well-known for mixing contemporary design into period settings. The emphasis is on personal service, with every client getting the time they need to complete their vision. The service includes everything from curtains and blinds to sofas, chairs and tables.

Highlights: A top resource for design aficionados, Lost Weekend is renowned for its covetable collections sourced throughout Europe and a strong focus on contemporary and 20th century designs. Big brands carried include Fritz Hansen, Hay, Magis, Carl Hansen, Knoll and Gubi – perfect investment pieces.

Best buy: Arne Jacobsen's iconic Swan chair is available for a limited time at the special price of €2,475, a saving of almost €1,000.

VENTURA DESIGN

Unit 12, Block 8, Blanchardstown Corporate Business Park, Dublin 15
01 820 8480 / 087 244 6464, Ventura.ie

Where's it at? California-born interior designer Arlene McIntyre has been based in Ireland since 1988, and her private 1,500-sq-ft showroom is just five minutes' drive from Blanchardstown Shopping Centre, open by appointment.

What to expect: A haven of luxe design, with eye-catching pieces sourced around Europe, mainly from Italy and France. Covetable items on display include Florentine chandeliers, upholstered headboards, Irish sofas made to order with short lead-in times, built-in bookcases and dining tables and chairs. The fabric and wallpaper library carries leading brands such as Schumacher, Pierre Frey, Sacho, Designers Guild, Cole & Son, Sanderson, Ralph Lauren and Robert Allen. Ventura will launch its own collection of designer fabrics produced in Italy for the Irish market this autumn.

Highlights: Arlene, who travels to the international design fairs to keep up to date with all the latest developments, offers a comprehensive interior design service. This includes room-by-room design, installation and fitting, removing the headache of devising and kitting out a scheme. Scaled furniture drawings and concept boards are provided for each project to bring ideas to life.

Best buys: The hand-crafted Florentine and Art Deco chandeliers, to make any space sparkle. Prices start at €995 for a six-light crystal chandelier.



NATIONAL LIGHTING

Western Retail Park, Knockmitten Lane, Dublin 12, 01 709 9070, Nationallighting.ie

Where's it at? Two minutes' drive from the Red Cow roundabout, off the Naas Road, just behind Woodies DIY.

What to expect: An enormous selection of lighting brands, many exclusive to National Lighting, such as the Royal Botania outdoor collection. Products are sourced at international trade fairs – the team attended the EuroLuce fair in Milan last April and the ranges purchased there are now arriving at the showroom. Lighting is arranged so as to be easily visualised in your own living space, with a lounge area and sitting room included. Sales consultants have more than 40 years of combined experience and receive ongoing training to ensure they are up to date with lighting and new technologies.

Highlights: Lighting can be difficult to get right in the home but investing a little time and money can really make a dramatic difference. It can play up good points or draw the eye away from problem areas. At National Lighting you can plan an effective, energy-efficient lighting scheme with the help of the expert team, who can even carry out a consultation in your home.

Best buys: The new Balloon flush pendant (€246) and wall light (€283) provide direct and indirect light – the wall light has an 0.5W LED nightlight.



LOMI DESIGN

124 Baldoyle Industrial Estate, Baldoyle, Dublin 13, 01 839 7001, Lomi.ie

Where's it at? The showroom / studio is located in Baldoyle, close to Portmarnock and Malahide on the north side of the capital, a few minutes from the M50 / M1 junction.

What to expect: LOMI Design has specialised in contemporary home products since 1998 and stocks an impressive range of contemporary furniture from leading Spanish and Italian brands. At its modern first floor showroom you can view kitchens, wardrobes, sofas, dining tables, chairs, living room storage, lighting, rugs and accessories. The showroom is a taster for a much larger range, the majority of which is customisable for your space. LOMI offers advice on everything from simple colour selection on a key piece of furniture to complete interior design solutions for the home. Owners Lorraine Stevens and Michael Connolly each have more than two decades of experience in design. LOMI delivers nationwide and has its own dedicated installation team. There is also a website with an online store.

Highlights: Covetable brands include Jesse, Bonaldo, Santos, Kristalia, Penta, Porada and Gan-Rugs. The Jesse range is a standout star, with its huge choice of storage solutions for living rooms and bedrooms in finishes that can be customised to individual requirements.

Best buys: The chic Frame sideboard by Jesse, available in several finishes either with legs or wall-hung, from €1,694, online or in-store.





HEDGEROE LIVING WITH DESIGN

Enniskerry Road, Kilternan, Co Dublin, Hedgeroe.com

Where's it at? Exit 15 off the M50, five minutes from Carrickmines Park, with free parking. There is also an online shop.

What to expect: A 5,000-sq-ft atelier of mainly furniture and accessories sourced directly from manufacturers in Ireland and around the world. Established four years ago by interior designer Rhona Roe, the store specialises in elegant, relaxed styling for every room, from New England nautical to plantation panache. Side tables, dining tables, armchairs, sofas, jute rugs, rattan furniture and accessories such as lampshades and wall art are displayed in roomsets. For gift ideas, there is the new the Irish Country House collection of candles, as well as prints, frames and HedgeRoe's own cushion designs. Speedy delivery can be arranged.

Highlights: Rhona's insider knowledge, design skills and collaboration with manufacturers means that customer wish lists can be granted at reasonable prices. Many furniture items are hand-painted in a range of soft historic hues. The joinery service, meanwhile, produces made-to-measure radiator covers and fitted cabinets. Prudent shoppers can sign up to the 'offer of the month' club to avail of discounts. Visit www.hedgeroe.com and join the 'offer of the month' club.

Best buy: The stylish Lewis three-seater sofa with two large seat cushions, four large back cushions and three scatter cushions, in a natural linen colour. The sofa has a removable slip cover with button and kick detail at the front and has been reduced from €1,400 to €1,120.

YEATS COUNTRY ANTIQUES

Francis Street, Dublin 8, 087 264 4494, Yeatscountryantiques.ie

Where's it at? In the antiques quarter of Dublin, near Christchurch and the Guinness Storehouse. The shop is located at the bottom of Francis Street.

What to expect: One of the largest selections of quality antiques in Ireland. Specialising in fine Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian furniture, the shop sources its pieces mainly in Ireland but also in other European countries. Currently in stock is a range of restored occasional armchairs, bookcases, wardrobes, dining room tables, pictures and other collectables. Victorian gates are also available. "Prices are now at much more realistic levels and there is great value to be had in antiques now. Given the volatility in the stock market, antiques are often considered a safe alternative for investment," says owner Mervyn Blanc.

Highlights: Yeats Country Antiques, a member of the Irish Antique Dealers' Association, puts an emphasis on keenly priced period furnishings and accessories. Although the Dublin store just opened last May, the Sligo shop has been in business for more than 20 years. Services include French polishing, upholstery, pine dipping and general restoration and repairs. Insurance valuations are carried out and a sourcing service is offered.



Best buys: A restored and reupholstered Victorian rosewood cabriole leg armchair (€1,250); a restored Victorian mahogany three-door book case (€6,500) and a Victorian walnut roll top desk (€2,250). Reproduction Coalbrookdale-style cast iron garden seats are available in several designs, €350 each.



DOMINO DESIGN

Old Court Industrial Estate, Boghall Road, Bray, Co Wicklow, 01 286 6094, Dominodesign.ie

Where's it at? Just off the N11, past the Topaz garage, take a right after the church, and it's on the right hand side.

What to expect: A showroom spanning 1,500 sq ft, stocking bespoke kitchen, living room and bedroom designs. All the cabinetry and furnishings are designed to order using 3D technology, manufactured on-site and professionally fitted by the in-house team. The company's design consultants can make a free visit by appointment to measure and optimise available space. Kitchen design is a specialty, with traditional, classical and contemporary designs catered for. Worktop solutions include granite, marble, Silestone and LG Hi-Macs. Appliances stocked include Neff, Siemens, Britannia, Hotpoint and AEG.

Highlights: Your personalised design will evolve from concept to reality, harnessing Domino's 25 years of experience. Recent kitchen designs have even incorporated libraries and home offices, while pantry units are hugely popular, as are drinks cabinets for a style statement in an open-plan kitchen, dining and living zones. There is a 25-year guarantee on cabinetry.

Best buys: A free wardrobe with every kitchen until September 2013.