
Barrio Antiguo in the Heights one-stop shop for custom furniture, colorful decor

By Diane Cowen | October 24, 2016 | Updated: October 24, 2016 5:22pm

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Photo: Miro Dvorscak

IMAGE 14 OF 30

The kitchen in this Kingwood home has Barrio Antiguo barstools, painted an antiqued turquoise.

Adriana Alaniz swipes her hand over the zinc-top dining room table in the middle of her Heights store.

"It's my No. 1 seller," she says proudly of the handmade furniture with its on-trend top, a cool gray with rivets down the middle.

There was a time when she sold more rustic-looking furniture, with heavy drawer pulls and knobs. If she were still selling that merchandise from her Barrio Antiguo store today, Alaniz admits, she likely wouldn't be in business.

Some of her inventory, such as bright Talavera pottery, Moroccan tin, three-dimensional stars and Dia de los Muertos skulls and embroidered items, are always popular.

The Mexican holiday now coincides with All Saints Day, and many Americans celebrate Dia de los Muertos, or Day of the Dead, as heartily as they do Halloween.

Although Halloween revelers put away their masks and pumpkins after the holiday passes, many who collect Dia de los Muertos figurines and other décor keep it

MORE INFORMATION

Barrio Antiguo

725 Yale

out year round.

Hours: 9:30 a.m.-5 p.m. Mondays- Saturdays

After all, why hide things that are so festive and pretty 11 months of the year?

Fist-size decorative skulls that serve as maracas, ceramic figurines, zippered pouches with embroidered Day of the Dead faces and fluffy pillows bearing the face of Mexican artist Frida Kahlo are scattered throughout Barrio Antiquo. In between are nightstands, shelving units, tables, sideboards and chairs to go with those dining tables.

Alaniz's parents, Francisco and Ana Sada, started the shop 25 years ago almost as a hobby, when her father bought and sold architectural salvage, such as old doors and ironwork, all over Houston.

At the same time, they'd buy merchandise at auctions and ship it to Mexico for sale at outdoor markets. As their business in Mexico dwindled, their American store took shape as a more permanent venture. Eventually, their daughter became the heart of the business.

As more transitional and modern styles grew more popular, Alaniz stepped up. Her furniture, usually made of knotty alder, became sleeker and finishing options trended to more neutral colors, such as gray and tan. She added sheets of copper and zinc on table tops, and now her crew of three is busy all of the time.

TRANSLATOR

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"The change came in by the demand of clients," she said. "They would say they like this or that, but they wanted it darker or lighter, taller or shorter. They wanted different finishes."

"My customers are people who are tired of mass production. They're looking for a hard-to-find piece that fits perfectly in their home," she said.

As customers describe what they want, Alaniz will often draw a sketch. She'll show boards with various paints and how different antiquing glazes and hand distressing can change the color and the final look.

So while her store still has plenty of pieces you can buy off of the floor, at least half of her business comes from custom orders made by homeowners, interior designers and restaurant owners.

She describes her work now as anything from industrial modern to farmhouse style. You'll find her furniture in Little Woodrow's, Tacos A Go Go, El Tiempo and even Ninfa's.

Local interior designer Pamela O'Brien of Pamela Hope Designs uses Barrio Antiguo for custom work. She incorporated nightstands and dressers - jazzed up with Swarovski crystal knobs - into the bedrooms of a recent project in Kingwood. She also used turquoise barstools in the home's kitchen.

Meanwhile, O'Brien ordered those same barstools for two other projects - in orange for a corporate client, without the antiquing and distressing she used in the Kingwood home, and another homeowner's bathroom.

"All of these homes are very different styles," O'Brien said. "You can show Adriana any design concept and she can make it to your specifications. Customers get a kick out of having



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Uptown Park fashion boutique celebrates 40 years

a hand in the design and that it's made locally and they can go and see it being made."

For people who have plenty of furniture but would like a few accessories to make their room pop, O'Brien has advice for them.

She suggests a brightly colored and embroidered pillow for an accent on a chair or even with solid-color pillows on a sofa. And something with Kahlo's image works just about anywhere.

"Frida Kahlo is a trend that's a constant. There's always something interesting about her," O'Brien said.

Vintage wooden Batea bowls, also called "dough bowls," can work in a home's entryway, or on a table to hold seasonal décor.

"Right now you could put small pumpkins or gourds in (a Batea bowl) or even put Halloween candy in it," said O'Brien. "If it's not completely your taste, having a piece here and there is fun, eye catching and a bit of a conversation piece."



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