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FRESH WESTERN

In an expansive new showroom at the Denver Mart, the Western Home & Design Center curates an eclectic collection of Western furnishings from top artisans, furniture makers and craftsmen

WRITTEN BY Eliza Cross

Much like the fashion industry, interior design trends come and go. Yesterday's "almond" appliances give way to brushed stainless steel, and wall-to-wall carpeting is replaced with sustainably sourced bamboo. The interior styles and colors that are in vogue today may be outdated next year, but Western design's iconic forms and classic lines seem to remain perennially popular. From Molesworth-inspired furniture to Navajo rugs to materials such as solid wood, tooled leather and hand-woven wool, Western furnishings tend to embody good design, sturdy materials, inherent craftsmanship and lasting quality.

In a new, 30,000-square-foot space, the Western Home & Design Center at the Denver Mart corrals more than two dozen vendors of Western-style furnishings, from handcrafted furniture such as leather sofas, hand-tooled chairs and oversized dining tables to original art, rugs, lighting and accessories. The brainchild of Denver Mart are owners John A. Doyle and Ted Herrick, the space is a sprawling complex where designers and store buyers can see a wide variety of furnishings displayed in appealing vignettes. On-site interior designers Elizabeth Campbell and Linda Johnston help visitors navigate the large collection.

"I think people continue to be intrigued and inspired by the romance and history of the Old West, and that's part of the reason why Western design remains classic," says Campbell. "Our vendors are true craftsmen, and the pieces we offer have such character at many different price points, from small accessories to high-end, one-of-a-kind artworks. Many of our lines offer custom options like uphol-



This page: The Eleanor Rigby Leather Company's *Urban Cowboy* features unique stitching details and top-grain leather. Photo: Courtesy of Eleanor Rigby Leather Company **Opposite, clockwise from top left:** A mirror trimmed in shed antlers is by Gilende Dittrich Designs. | Showroom furnishings are arranged in vignettes, like this arrangement featuring a chair from The Great Blue Heron Furniture Co., a rug by Escalante Rugs, a Desert Digs chest and artwork from Ashton Fine Art/Kellogg Home. | Turquoise inlaid table and chairs are by Andy Sanchez. Photos: Povy Kendal Atchison



stery in hair on hide, leather cushions or antique brass nail-head trim. Steel Strike Leather Products will even put a hand-tooled, personal leather brand on your furniture. We can get very creative.”

“Western design is informed by many historical cultures: Native American, Spanish and even the settlers who arrived here with their Victorian furniture,” says Johnston. “We represent styles ranging from rustic to Modern, with pieces for cowboy cabins, ranch estates and everything in between. You can furnish a whole house or just pick up one unique piece to build around like an Andy Sanchez turquoise-inlaid table, which is truly a piece of art in and of itself.”

The Denver Mart is open to the trade only, serving buyers from retail establishments and businesses as well as professional interior designers. Individuals who are looking for



Western Flair for Every Design Discipline

The Denver Mart's Western Home & Design Center represents a wide-ranging variety of eclectic furnishings and styles, and the staff encourages interior designers to stop in with their clients and explore the offerings from these vendors:

- | | | | |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|
| • Always Unique | • Creative Western Designs | • JLT Studios | • Skyhawk Rugs |
| • American Natural Resources | • Desert Digs Furniture | • Karen Kreek Camp Design | • Sonoran Range |
| • Andy Sanchez | • Eleanor Rigby Leather Co. | • Kellogg Home/Ashton | • Southwest Looms |
| • Blue River Traders | • Escalante Rugs | • Old Hickory Furniture Co. | |
| • Carol Braden Guitars | • Gelinde Dittrich Designs | • Rohma Mesquite | |
| • Classic Forge | • The Great Blue Heron Furniture | • Rusticos Mexicanos | |
| • Cleveland Creek Log Furniture | • Green Gables Furniture | • Silverado Home | |

furnishings can gain access to the exclusive complex with their designers. “If your designer doesn’t belong to the mart, call us and we’ll come down and escort you both up to the showroom,” says Campbell. “If you’re not currently working with a designer, you can work with one of the mart’s concierge designers; just check in at the front desk and ask for an introduction.”

The center’s furnishings can work in many different interiors, according to Campbell. “Our primary draw is the Western market, but we encourage



This page, from top: The mixed media *Rodeo* guitar is from Carol Braden Guitars. Photo: Courtesy Carol Braden | Antiqued cowhide is trimmed with a hand-tooled damask motif in The Eleanor Rigby Leather Company’s *Weatherford* collection. Photo: Courtesy of Eleanor Rigby Leather Company



all designers to come in — no matter what style they’re working with — because they might find that one eclectic piece that works in any setting,” she says. “For example, because of their graceful shape, antlers can look terrific in contemporary interiors; you might try an antler-trimmed mirror in a modern context. A chair or stool covered in Tibetan goat can add textural contrast and a touch of whimsy to a room. The great thing about our showroom space is that it gives designers the opportunity to mix and match pieces on the spot and see firsthand how things look together.”

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Western furnishings can work in traditional settings, too, Johnston says. “Eleanor Rigby’s tooled leather furniture looks perfect on a Persian rug; the combination is evocative of an English library. The tooling is elegant and doesn’t scream Western, but the piece would also be right at home in a ranch or mountain setting. Some of our rug vendors offer Navajo-inspired patterns that go very well with different styles and color palettes. Pendleton has an Arts-and-Crafts line that looks great in a bungalow, and the hues of brown, turquoise, red and burnt orange can

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A barrel chair is customized with Western detailing, including hair on hide, leather cushions and antique brass nail head trim. Tibetan goat covers a whimsical antler stool from Sonoran Range. Photo: Povy Kendal Atchison

add a pop of color that really brightens a room. Tables with iron bases often have crossover appeal, and you can accessorize with

a rustic antique barnwood piece or a vintage movie poster. Sometimes just a pop of Western will add pizzazz to a room.”

“Western design pays homage to the American West and a proud, elegant way of life, with influences from European, cowboy and Indian heritage as well as historic lodge, ranch and hacienda settings,” says Steel Strike Leather Products’ Philip Smith, who was one of the center’s first tenants. “It’s an enduring style that remains truly classic and timeless.” ■

Eliza Cross (www.elizacross.com) is a senior contributing editor for *Western Art & Architecture* and the author of five books, including the award-winning *Family Home of the New West* (Cooper Square Publishing). A member of the Authors Guild and American Society of Journalists and Authors, she has written more than 250 articles for a variety of national and regional publications.

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