

DESIGN



Photos by Karen Sachar

Ruth Davis, owner of Found, has created a bespoke collection of home goods that are made upon order, including this Round Rojo Alicante coffee table.

Custom home goods collection is a designers dream

Ruth Davis, owner of Found, creates high-end furniture pieces that stand out in a crowd

By Diane Cowen
STAFF WRITER

Ruth Davis has launched her own collection of locally produced, customizable tables, chairs and home accessories at Found, her West Alabama home goods store full of one-of-a-kind pieces and a favorite stop for Houston-area interior designers.

Davis has always done custom work at the request of designers, but now she's producing a fuller range available to the public: tables, chairs, stools, a settee and even a pair of 14-karat gold painted candlesticks.

Celebrating its 15th year, Found began with



Ruth Davis is the owner of Found.

Davis and a business partner, Aaron Rambo, who was the creative/design side while Davis, who worked in banking years ago before leaving her career to raise her two daughters, was the business side. A decade ago, they moved from their original shop on Bartlett Street to the current location on West Alabama, in the Greenway/Upper Kirby area.

In 2018, Rambo left Found, and Davis, who is not classically trained in design but has an impeccable eye, became its sole owner. Her showroom is known for its playful and unexpected displays meant to inspire designers and shoppers to find new ways to use old things.

A trip to Found is a high-end treasure hunt, *Found continues on D6*

TREND

At women-only Heels and Horsepower supercar club, 6-figure cars, 6-inch stilettos rule

By Amber Elliott
STAFF WRITER

Heads turn when Alex Blair roars up to the valet in a Lamborghini Huracán Evo Spyder. Her convertible is the shade of a ripe tangerine, boasts 600-plus horsepower under the hood and is impossible to miss. Surprise turns to shock as its doors lift and a petite brunette in platform stilettos emerges from the exotic supercar.

Were onlookers expecting someone else?

"Sometimes, nice women come up to me and say, 'I thought a man would be coming out of this car,'" Blair says. "I make friends like that. It's glamorous and rewarding to have the car. Not to show off, but nice to talk about."

And that's the very reason she became a founding member of Heels and Horsepower, a supercar club for women who like their cars exotic and their shoes sky high. Diane Caplan came up with the concept in 2017;



Brett Coomer/Staff photographer

Alex Blair shows off her Louboutin heels and her Lamborghini at the Heels and Horsepower luncheon.

the following spring, she hosted an event with Alex "Supercar Blondie" Hirschi to launch the group. With more than 43 million Facebook followers, the Dubai-based vlogger's social media page was the fastest growing auto page that year.

Hirschi, Caplan and Blair share an essential commonality: Cars are their thing.

More Matchbox than Barbie

"It's what I get up in

the morning for every single day," Caplan says. "Back when I bought my first Porsche 911, it wasn't common, but now women are driving all kinds of cars. I'd go to car shows, car meets, and it was just guys, guys, guys. There was nothing special for the women who were buying their own Ferraris and Bentleys."

So she made her own club and trademarked the name. "I'm a big shoe fanatic. I love shoes and I love horsepower. I want-

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FOUND

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as her inventory turns over fairly quickly. She sells some current things, too, including Tina Frey resin pieces, Christopher Spitzmuller lamps and a wide assortment of coffee-table books.

The idea to create her own collection was planted years ago when Davis saw a narrow, vintage console with iron down-swept legs. It was a simple piece but reminded her of something many designers came into her shop looking for. She bought it and set out to reproduce it, first with a marble top and then with reverse painted glass, for a look that resembled a lacquered top.

"The minute I saw it I said, 'Oh, we can reproduce this and make it in any size a designer wants,'" Davis said of the piece that now starts at \$3,500 for a 66-inch-wide and 12-inch-deep piece. "A designer can tell me whatever color he or she needs and we'll do it in that color."

First, a fabricator laser cuts the metal base, then a second artisan reverse paints the glass top and a third applies the gold finish, though it doesn't have to be finished in gold. Davis keeps all of the work in Houston, feeding the local economy.

This table and the other pieces were made for designers as they asked for them. Now, Davis is launching the group as a more formal collection that homeowners can buy, too. Everything can be made in



The Curvaceous Lounge Chair



A retro Mushroom Stool

different sizes, colors and, in some cases, with other materials — and fairly quickly, compared to lead times for High Point furniture market special orders, which still can run up to 10 months.

"These things add personality to a project. It's just like clothes. I used to have 15 pairs of black pants; I never met a pair of black pants I didn't like," said Davis. "It's the last thing I need in my wardrobe. You really need the opposite of what you are drawn to or it gets boring. You might see (something) in



The Petite Settee from Found

here and not like it, but put it in a house, and it adds a funky, different vibe."

There's a coffee-table version of the console, 60 inches wide, 20 inches deep and 18 inches tall, starting at \$3,250. Other tables include an 18-inch cube of pink travertine

(\$2,950); a steel I-beam that's a perfect drink perch (\$450); and a 42-inch round marble Rojo Alicante (\$4,950). A powder-coated steel chair (\$2,200) is so heavy that you wouldn't really use it at a dining table, but it'd work in a large bathroom near a bathtub to hold

extra towels.

She offers two upholstered pieces, a petite settee (60 inches wide; \$6,700) and a curvaceous midcentury-style lounge chair (\$4,850) that she jokingly calls her Beyoncé chair. Her showroom sample is in expensive Kelly Wearstler fabric;



Gold Lustre candlesticks



The Steel I-Beam table

prices vary with the fabric.

Finally, Davis created two different stools, one a simple metal base topped with a cushion (\$1,550) and the other a mushroom shape (\$1,550) that was inspired by a 1970s version covered in blue shag carpet that she once saw.

"It started with filling a need of what designers were asking for. Now we're thinking about it," Davis said. "They're always made on request. It has taken off, and it is rewarding to see designers accept our ideas."

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Photos by Karen Sachar

CLUB

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ed a name that was classy and identified that we're women, not girls. I wanted something more mature."

Growing up, Caplan says she played with more Matchbox cars than Barbie dolls. Her dad always had old Mustangs, and she enjoyed working on them with him. As an adult, she bought her first Mercedes-Benz and became friends with the salesperson who sold it to her, the sole woman on the showroom floor.

Years later, when the dealership was ready to modernize its online presence and move into digital sales, the owners called Caplan.

"They said, 'You're the only computer geek we know who loves cars,'" she recalls. "I took a chance and became their top salesman that very first month."

At its peak, Heels and Horsepower counted roughly 100 members. Sometimes they drove Ferraris, McLarens and Lamborghinis to brunch, other times to car rallies. Once, they tailgated to the Golden Nugget Lake Charles Hotel and Casino, owned by Caplan's future boss, Landry's founder and CEO Tilman Fertitta.

She'd worked freelance for his other venture, Post Oak Motor Cars, since 2017. After the pandemic hit, Caplan moved to Tulum, Mexico. Heels and Horsepower events fizzled out, and Fertitta offered hire her full time.

Caplan didn't want the club to die. From overseas, she watched friendships continue to develop. The women would go to the racetrack or dinner together.

"Then Alex reached out last year and asked if I'd ever consider selling it," Caplan says. Heels and Horsepower was reborn.

Heels and Horsepower 2.0

Caplan was strict. She required members to have a supercar — loosely defined as a high-performance luxury sports car — and prove ownership. Blair agrees with the latter; women driving vehicles that belong to a boyfriend and husband need not apply. But she's also angling to steer the club in a slightly different di-



Photos by Brett Coomer/Staff photographer

Cassandra Smith-Cooper arrives at the Heels and Horsepower luncheon in her Bentley.



Alex Blair, left, greets Age Johnson at the Heels and Horsepower luncheon.



Rania Edlebi makes an entrance at the Heels and Horsepower luncheon in her Audi.

rection.

"I was thinking I only want supercars, but the girls are so nice," Blair says. "I'm more about the social. I want to combine both."

Community is part of her culture. The Brazilian native grew up watching Formula One driver Ayrton Senna race every Sunday. He was her idol.

She studied geology in college and later landed an oil and gas job at Petrobras Americas' Houston office. Through Heels and Horsepower, she met women who shared her passion for fast cars and high-end fashion.

"I think Houston has a very high supercar culture because it's easy to park here in comparison, to say, New York,"

Blair suggests. "We don't see them out there unless we go to the Hamptons."

As the new president and owner, her inaugural Heels and Horsepower event was hosted across from Post Oak Motor Cars inside the Post Oak Hotel at Uptown's glass showroom followed by brunch in the Oak Room, a members-only restaurant.

Jacquie Baly, president and CEO of BalyProjects and an adjunct professor with the University of Houston, pulled up in a new whip. A newlywed, her husband surprised his new bride with a Maserati GranTurismo for her birthday.

"The hardest part was finding the color, because I love red

cars," Baly says. "I've always been a car girl. I used to like muscle cars when I was younger. As I got older, my tastes changed; that's when I became an ultra-premium fan."

She received a Dodge Charger for her Sweet 16 gift and always had a fondness for Chevrolet Corvettes — those were popular in Southeast Houston where she grew up. Then Baly switched to more reliable SUVs while her sons were at home. Once they left for college, she swapped her Range Rover for a two-seater Mercedes-Benz SL.

When Blair told Baly she was reviving Heels and Horsepower, Baly signed on immediately. She became an official

member at the Post Oak Hotel event.

There are three membership levels, each with annual dues: personal (\$600), business (\$1,000) and concierge (\$1,700). Perks range from event access to promotional opportunities on the club's website.

"I used to be in a sorority in college and missed that camaraderie," Baly says. "We have common interests with the cars, similar pasts and a lot of us are around the same age. There are some women in this group who don't work full time like I do, but they're just as passionate about their lives."

For her sophomore event, Blair hosted a holiday brunch at Brasserie19. She lifted a Christian Louboutin lace bootie onto her Huracán's bumper, revealing a bright red sole. Two young men walking past paused to take in the scene.

"I'm very biased because I just love her. We're both immigrants and really connect on that front," Baly says. "She created this safe space for women to enjoy ourselves and not be judged. This is her legacy, and she wants it to have some kind of imprint on Houston."

Blair plans to host four events annually and register 100 members. Long term, she would love to expand to other cities and start a Heels and Horsepower magazine. She's also working on a code of conduct. It's important to her that the women hold themselves to high standards.

Caplan is confident the group is in good hands. She's happy to take a back seat and jaunt around town in a green "big, old jacked-up Jeep" named Olive until she pulls the trigger on her next supercar.

"Most guys don't think too much of a Bentley or Rolls-Royce because they're nice and pretty or fluffy. But when women get out of a Ferrari and Lamborghini, like Alex's, it's really something. It's a big thing when a woman knows what's under the hood and understands the piece of machinery they're driving," Caplan says. "I want to be respectful of letting her shine right now. She'll take the reins and make it her club."

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