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Retrofit Home turns furniture on edge

By Nicole Tsong
Seattle Times staff reporter

The storefront at Retrofit Home is a good test: If you perk up at the sight of aqua and yellow stripes, a hot-pink sign and a mandarin-orange chair, you might well be on the cusp of decorating nirvana.

And even better, those playful hues — along with accessories like a neon-pink clock — make the store's modern touch feel more accessible. Which is the point. Retrofit co-owners Jön Milazzo and Lori Pomeranz are trying to dissuade people of the notion that contemporary furniture can be, well, intimidating.

"Modern furniture can be taken way too seriously," Pomeranz said. "It sometimes can be a little sterile instead of being fun."

Not at their new Capitol Hill store. Clean lines are omnipresent, but they're shot through with color. The initial blast at the front door continues inside, where you can buy a green velvet loveseat for \$1,550, a white table swirled with color for \$625 or a fluffy red lambskin throw for \$99.

"There's always a ton of color in everything we do," Pomeranz said.

Milazzo and Pomeranz met more than a decade ago at the Fremont Sunday Market, where Pomeranz sold recycled furniture and Milazzo sewed backpacks, hats and clothing. A chat about starting a business turned into a decorative wall-finish company that branched out into color consultation and interior design. Later, talk about starting their own store led to Retrofit, which opened last April.

Mixing and matching

People often view contemporary furniture as cold, stark and expensive, Milazzo said. Their store counters that notion, and Milazzo and Pomeranz encourage people new to contemporary decorating to embrace items they are drawn to instead of worrying about whether it will work perfectly.



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Lori Pomeranz and Jön Milazzo are co-owners of Retrofit Home, a hip modern furniture store on Capitol Hill that insists on selling fun with its pieces. The bench they're perched on is \$999, the gray sofa is \$1,800 and the beige sleeper-sofa is \$949.



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Pomeranz sells some of her own art at the store.

For example, they have a new lamp line that allows people to mix and match lampshades with bases, giving them another way to slowly embrace change with color or unusual base shapes.

"If you buy the things you love, you can put them together," Milazzo said. "If you love a modern couch, you can put it in a Craftsman house and mix it up."

While some customers plunge into the modern aesthetic, others need to start more slowly, she said, maybe replacing traditional lamps with sleek ones, or pairing a striped modern chair with an Oriental rug.

"Most people, especially in Seattle, are looking for a combination," Milazzo said. "They're looking for, 'how do you splice it in?'"

Neighborhood store

Milazzo and Pomeranz wanted Retrofit to be a neighborhood store as much as a place to buy furniture, so accessories such as computer cases, sassy purses and dynamic dishes pepper the store.

"People just run in on their way to a birthday party," Pomeranz said. "We wrap it up as best we can, and they're out the door."

The business partners and best friends continue to design, offering advice at the store and doing home consultations for a fee.

But at the store, they're focused on keeping it fresh and lively, Milazzo said.

"I just don't want to ever be accused of being boring."

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Window Shopping, an occasional feature in digs, takes readers into various stores around the Puget Sound area. Send us ideas at homegarden@seattletimes.com.

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At Retrofit, the white chairs (\$200) add a playful touch. The ottoman is \$599 (the blue chair is discontinued).



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The sofa is \$1,000, leather ottoman is \$465 and the blown glass pieces vary.



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Retrofit Home sells a variety of lamps (yellow lamp, \$225; blue one, \$64).