

MORE IN STORE
Meredith Ellis, pictured inside her Austin home, is expanding her interior design business with a retail location set to open this summer.

AUSTIN

HOME, JAMES

Meredith Ellis sets up shop on Austin's design-friendly West Sixth Street.

By Connie Dufner
Photography by Sandy Carson



When Meredith Ellis felt a tug on her Texas heartstrings five years ago, she knew it was time to come home. The Hill Country native had two young children, a portfolio polished by 13 years in New York and L.A., and a dream to create a bespoke design boutique.

That dream springs to life this summer at James (1411 W. Sixth St., Austin). Ellis envisions it as a haven for interior designers and the design-savvy, filled with merchandise she's become familiar with while working on both coasts, that was previously unavailable in Austin. "There are so many creative people here," she says. "Austin is an emerging, rapidly growing city. We need the design industry to keep up."

The shop, in a 1910 house within walking distance of antiques stores, art galleries and restaurants, will offer Coleen & Company lighting; textiles by Kathryn M. Ireland, Ferrick Mason, Pintura Studio, Tulu Textiles and Clare Frost; Bunny Williams Home furniture; custom upholstery and drapery; and, eventually, Ellis' own furniture lines.

"We want people to be inspired," says Ellis, who was the only Texas designer to participate in New York's recent Sotheby's Designer Showhouse. "We don't want it to be a store where there's just a bunch of furniture. It will operate more like a house." Ellis describes her aesthetic as transitional, preferring a mix of traditional and modern styles. Why James? It's both a favorite and a family name. "I always said if we had a third child, we would name the child, boy or girl, James, after my father. It turns out my third child is the store!" meredithellisdesign.com

ELLIS' HOTS "I love the scalloped edges of the Venus chair by Soane Britain"; Tomas Maier, creative director for Bottega Veneta; home automation; bringing the outdoors in; "I love Coleen & Company lanterns... they can be used anywhere that needs a touch of whimsy"

ELLIS' NOTS "Doing anything for shock value, particularly interiors"; accent walls; ultrasuede