



Milanese If You Please

Say 'Ciao, bella' to Casa, West Ave's newest furniture showroom, full of Italian furniture and flair. *By Meredith Xavier*

As great businesses often do, the idea for Casa — a sprawling new 10,000-square-foot furniture showroom in West Ave — grew out of a seemingly unrelated occurrence.

Five years ago, development whizzes and power couple Jerry Hooker and Jacob Sudhoff were building their first home together. They fell in love with a piece from Giorgetti, an Italian brand they knew nothing about at the time. But they decided to explore what other Italian brands had to offer, soon discovering that a number of these companies were providing an all-inclusive lifestyle experience — from furniture and lighting to custom closets and kitchens. A lightbulb moment: Perfect for commercial development!

The couple's partnership with Giorgetti began with a 32-condo luxury midrise, set to break ground this spring directly across the street from Casa. "With a whole lot of luck and good faith, [Giorgetti] agreed to go down a path with us, letting us borrow their name and put it on our building wall," Hooker says. "We have spent years now working hand in hand with their architects and their designers to envision the Giorgetti condominium project."

That idea soon snowballed into an all-Italian-brand retail storefront. Casa feels like it's straight outta Milan, with curated and highly styled vignettes from Poltrona Frau, Listone Giordano, Rimadesio, Elam Kitchens by Tisettanta, Viabizzuno and Tacchini. Each company has its own self-designed space within the showroom, transitioning from contemporary and minimal shelving and modular storage rooms to ultra-chic, fully styled living rooms. "Houston lacked environments like this," says Hooker, "and in all but two cases, there was no representation for any of these brands in Houston prior to us."

And it comes as no surprise that kitchens are one of Casa's specialties. "For us being Italian, it is where we take the most important decisions," says Giovanni Del Vecchio, Giorgetti CEO. "I asked my wife to marry me in the kitchen!"