

WHAT'S IN STORE

Daher Interior Design mixes global with local at its new retail outpost, Mélange, in Kennebunk, Maine.

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PHOTOGRAPHS BY JESSICA DELANEY

MÉLANGE IS A FRENCH WORD MEANING MIXTURE.

For Paula and Clayton Daher—the mother-and-son duo of award-winning Daher Interior Design—it's also the best way to describe their latest endeavor, a new lifestyle home store located in Kennebunk, Maine. “For us, it's a mixture of furnishings, accessories, lighting, bespoke upholstery, and artwork from all over the world as well as Maine,” says Paula Daher. “For years we've been going to Morocco and Paris sourcing items, so many of the things you find here are from both. But it was also important to us to discover artisans from the state so we could showcase what they do.”

How did the concept come about? After purchasing a home in Kennebunk four years ago, Paula worked remotely from there on Fridays and Mondays. But it was still challenging to get the word out about the firm, even though it is well known in the Boston area. “So we made the decision to expand our studio in a big way. We bought a building that had been empty and did a full renovation,” she explains. “We replaced absolutely everything. Two-thirds is now Mélange, and one-third is an extension of our interior design studio.” The result is that when people drive by the building today, they are intrigued enough to come in.

“Before, it was such an eyesore as a blighted building, so they're amazed at the transformation,” Paula continues. “It also demonstrates what our team can do as designers and interior architects,” Clayton adds. “We did all of the architectural drawings for the building itself and handled the design. I went to architecture school, so that's my background prior to interiors.” Additionally, the firm partnered with Gregory Lombardi Design for the landscape design of the grounds and Richardson Corp and Adams + Beasley for the construction.

Since much of what Daher Interior Design does with its full-service residential clients



ABOVE

The store is designed as an experience with vignettes set up so clients can visualize how items might look in their own homes. This provides them an opportunity to picture their spaces with a fresh perspective.

LEFT

From tableware and ceramics to light fixtures and home furnishings, Mélange features overseas treasures from destinations including Paris and Morocco, as well as items made in Maine.



is purchase accessories or finishing touches that happen at the end of an installation, the team thought a retail store selling the items they put into their clients' homes was a natural progression. "Now, when the end of the project arrives, we can pull from our own inventory," Paula says. "It's also enabled us to stretch creative muscles in different ways." Plus, *Mélange* as a whole, Clayton notes, is practically a postcard of what the firm does. And to achieve this, the 3,000-square-foot space was designed in a very specific way. "We created a store that's an experience. We set up vignettes so that when people come in, they can see how things could look in their own homes, and it also allows them to think about their spaces differently," Paula says. "For example, we've set it up so that you can understand how to mix beautiful Moroccan pottery with a fixture made by a lighting designer from Portland."

While the team knew there was a market for their idea, the favorable feedback has definitely helped reinforce the concept. "It's been met with such positive enthusiasm by people coming in because the mix of product is unlike anything in this area," Paula concludes. "For years, I've been coming up here searching for different sculptures and ceramics for clients, but it's been such a joy to find even more—and to have these artists want to bring their items to the store has been a win-win."



ABOVE

An exterior image of the revitalized structure at 135 Port Road in Kennebunk, which is now home to both *Mélange* and a new studio for Boston-based Daher Interior Design.

LEFT

Mother-and-son duo Paula and Clayton Dahar of Daher Interior Design stand among a mix of treasures they've sourced from global travels and those they've discovered from local artisans.