

RETAIL TALK

Raye boutique, Houston

CLAIRE F HAMILTON, WGSN 27.03.07

WGSN talks to Magda Sayeg and Stephanie Halford of the Raye boutique about spring/fall buys, Houston's retail climate and knitting for the public good.

Raye boutique is an anomaly within Houston's mall-based shopping scene. The small shop, in the heart of **Houston's hip Montrose neighbourhood**, stocks a careful selection of up-and-coming women's labels from around world.



Raye interior

Raye is cleverly situated off main drag of Westheimer Road, lying adjacent to the popular café Brasil and Domy Books on Dunlavy.

Houston's creative community frequents Domy for its rarefied selection of art books and DVDs. The store also hosts small but noteworthy exhibitions, like a recent show from Texas-based singer, artist and all-around cult hero Daniel Johnston.

All three stores are located near to an inner courtyard where movies are screened twice a week, creating a sort of meeting spot for fans of art and design. "All of my businesses complement each other," said Magda Sayeg, who owns Brasil, Domy Books and Raye, which she expects will expand in the future.

Despite their mall-like synergy, each shop stands independently from the next, befitting the intimate, residential quality of Montrose.



Sunshine & Shadow dress, Rachel Comey belt

Sunshine & Shadow skirt, Clu top and vest, Kyo Hashimoto necklace

Samantha Pleet dress, Clu vest

Raye

2608 Dunlavy
Houston, Texas

Tel: +1 (713) 529 1993

www.rayehouston.com

Labels stocked for spring

- Rachel Comey, Samantha Pleet, Lyell, Ulla Johnson, Clu, Lyell, Grey Ant, Borne, Les Prairies de Paris, Mociun, Sunshine & Shadow, Anna Corinna bags, Chie Mihara and Keep shoes.

Fall additions

- Martin Margiela Ligne 6, Crispin and Basilio, Coven and Loeffler Randall.
- Magda Sayeg, owner
- Stephanie Halford, co-buyer and store manager

Knitta

www.knittaplease.com

Domy Books

www.domystore.com

Magda Sayeg Scarves

www.magdasayeg.com

Related reports

[Knitta](#)

[Letter from Houston](#)

Known for small cafes and second-hand stores, **Montrose has become a buzzier retail destination since American Apparel opened a store in 2006.** "When American Apparel moves to other cities it kind of frustrates people [as a chain store], but it's good for us. We'd rather see Houston as a place where people don't just go to the mall. It's becoming more that way, there's more retail," said Sayeg.

Raye attracts a wide range of shoppers in-the-know and the shop's biggest fans tend to be between 25-35. The shop's price point is approximately \$175-\$350 for shoes and apparel. Sayeg looks to stock items that are reasonably priced for their high level of quality and design, opting out, she says, of the "cheap sell".



Steven Alan top with Grey Ant jeans, Lyell top and Borne skirt with Kyo Hashimoto necklace

Rachel Comey

Stephanie Halford, co-buyer and store manager at Raye, said there's no formula for what sells and what doesn't, but the shop is clearly refreshing to its fans. "People shopping at the Houston Galleria are not interested in Vena Cava, they're interested in status stuff," said Halford. But there is some crossover between status labels and the design sensibility at Raye. "Because Daryl K is carried at the Barneys Co-op, and I'm glad they do, they get her name out, and people respond to that," she said.

For spring, Raye will stock **Rachel Comey, Samantha Pleet, Lyell, Ulla Johnson, Clu, Lyell, Grey Ant, Borne, Les Prairies de Paris, Mociun, Sunshine & Shadow, Anna Corinna** bags, **Chie Mihara** and **Keep** shoes.

Fall picks include many of the above as well as **Martin Margiela Ligne 6, Crispin and Basilio, Coven** and **Loeffler Randall**.



Lyell blouse with Grey Ant jeans

window display with Anna Corinna bag

Rachel Comey dress

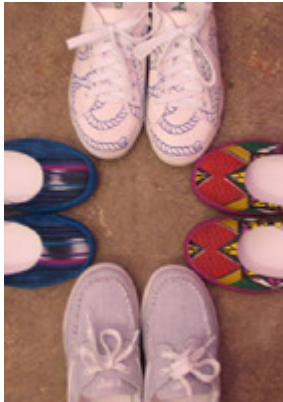
Raye currently carries men's and children's items, but is planning to phase out menswear, which will likely be replaced by more housewares and gift items. **"People coming in want more men's, but then men's doesn't sell,"** said Sayeg.

Unique accessories and handmade scarves, created by Sayeg, are also on offer. **Halford and Sayeg are also co-founders of Knitta, a gang that tags city streets around the world, and especially Houston, with bright, knitted cosies under aliases like PolyCotN.** Their work has attracted the attention of publications worldwide and Halford (AKA Purl Nekklas) said that temporary exhibitions are in the works.

A Knitta installation is set to open May 3 at the Standard Hotel in Hollywood.

Call it graffiti or public art, but the colourful, handcrafted quality of Knitta tags makes for a clever interruption in stale, urban landscapes. Sayeg complains of urban sameness and Houston's lack of historic preservation in particular: "They're constantly tearing down old buildings, even an old gas station could be turned into a restaurant." But that's not to say that city residents don't care, according to Sayeg.

"When [preservation] is done, it's really appreciated," she added.



Keep shoes



Rachel Comey shoes



Knitta tag on Raye exterior



Courtyard

Raye maintains the distinction of being under-the-radar since it does not advertise, and it exists in a much smaller independent retail community than that of New York or LA, for example.

That ability to capture a desire that isn't being satisfied is what makes Raye such a stand-out, according to Sayeg: "What's great about Houston is that you can do things like this. I definitely don't feel like I'm *making a difference*, but the people that come in are really happy."

© WGSN 2007