

# DORR DESIGN STUDIO

story by Jessica Valentine  
photo by Sarah James Dorr



It's easy to overlook Dustin Dorr's Paseo design studio. The tan brick building just east of popular dive bar The Red Rooster stood vacant on 30th and Walker for years—that is until the 41-year-old interior designer returned to his roots. In August of 2014, Dorr relocated to Oklahoma City to forge his own design path and be a part of the city's entrepreneurial current.

After earning a degree in architecture from the University of Colorado, the OKC native moved to California with his soon-to-be wife and fellow Oklahoman, Sarah James, in 2003. He eventually earned another Bachelor's in interior design from the Interior Designers Institute in Newport Beach. However, it was 2006 when he made a decision that would define his career. He accepted a gig with renowned interior designer John Wooden (grandson of the famous UCLA basketball coach of the same name), and became a partner in John Wooden Interiors.

Wooden, having more of an artistic background and 17 years experience working with high-end clients, complemented Dorr's architecturally cultivated education in what Dorr describes as "the perfect balance."

"I learned a lot from him," Dorr says. "I think he learned a lot from me as well, and it was an opportunity that was hard to leave. We had built that company for ten years."

Relocating across the country is a big decision, but even more so when your spouse also has a successful career. Sarah is a major national blogger who started whoorl.com in 2005, a beauty and lifestyle blog that has earned her TV spots on *Nightline* and *Rachael Ray*, commercials with

Levi's and Pantene, a feature story in *The New York Times*, and numerous other appearances.

Let's be honest. Maintaining an online presence with TV appearances is easier on the West Coast, given the abundance of stereotypes about Oklahoma as flyover country. Yet Dorr says he experienced something unexpected from colleagues and friends when he broke the news about his move.

"Everybody was so envious, and it was interesting to hear," Dorr says. "There's so much opportunity here, and I'm excited to share my experience. There's an excitement around here that even people in California were completely intrigued [about]."

His studio is an eclectic mix of mid-century vintage furniture accented by long, hanging sculptures made of fiberglass collected from wrecked boats. Yet once inside, there are no prices on anything. Is the space more of an inventory of items yet to find homes in customer homes? Just ask. Dorr's studio also showcases the minimalist abstract and mixed media paintings created by his older brother, Christopher Dorr.

This kind of "collecting and acquiring," as Dorr describes it, is part of his mission. "Those two things in an interior are critical," Dorr said. "If it doesn't look collected and acquired, it looks like you hired a designer or just went to a showroom and bought what they had."

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**Barrios** / According to Keith Paul, the 5,000 square foot A Good Egg Mexican concept will open in late October. Featuring a 2,000 square foot patio and seating for 200 (100 in/100 out), the restaurant will be helmed by Chef de Cuisine Chad Willis, and the bar will specialize in high quality tequila and craft cocktails.

**ur.bun** / The third concept from Daniel Chae, this Tower Theatre complex restaurant will bring the Korean-inspired steam buns Chae does so remarkably well to Uptown 23rd. According to Chae, the concept will open in October and we cannot wait.

**Gatewood Home & Garden Tour** / One of Oklahoma City's prettiest neighborhoods opens its doors and gardens, and includes a semi-famous haunted house on October 25. Advance tickets \$12 at GatewoodOKC.com.