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INSIDE

DECOR

A LOFTY APPROACH TO DESIGN

For downtown L.A.'s dwellers, the decorating options are many: everything from vintage furniture to linens to modern accessories.

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The loft craze did more than bring thousands of residents to downtown Los Angeles. The boom also delivered some good shopping with it — a scattered but surprisingly strong lineup of destinations for vintage furniture, modern accessories, linens and home décor gifts.

Steel scraps, discarded conveyor belts and twisted beams all provide inspiration at Cleveland Art, a spot for industrial salvage that has been repurposed into appealing home furnishings. These pieces have a sturdy heft that's comforting, and the vintage elements manage to feel totally modern. The newly relocated downtown showroom, for retail and wholesale, represents a 4-year-old Los Angeles outpost of a Cleveland business, where most of the items are made and then shipped west. On a recent visit, several tables on display, including one topped with a lovely old piece of oak, used riveted beams recovered from a cement factory. Wood factory molds had been turned into mirror frames. A coffee table, topped with a patchwork of metal scraps, was \$850; other tables ran to \$5,000; and a lamp with two icy, hand-blown glass shades was \$900. The store's currently at 523 S. Hewitt St., but a move is planned to another downtown building soon so check

the wete before your visit. (310) 940-4134, www.clevelandart.com.

For the creative work of local artisans, there's Fifth Floor. With its turquoise exterior, the store manages to stand out among the vibrant art galleries and restaurants that line Chung King Court in Chinatown. Fifth Floor owner Robert Apodaca has filled the sunny space with an eclectic mix of furnishings by local designers and architects that fall somewhere between art and design. Visit now and you'll see heavy cotton rope knot bracelets by Tanya Aguiñiga (\$40 to \$70), rubber placements by Josh Jakus (\$9), metal bamboo vases by Stacey Hoshimiya (\$250), nesting tables by Ali Jeevanjee (\$320 to \$440) and furniture by Earl Parson (\$160 to \$1,000). Through Aug. 20, Fifth Floor is showcasing the newly formed LA Box Collective, a group of furniture designers and makers who emphasize environmentally conscious materials and production. 502 Chung King Court, (213) 687-8443, www.fifthfloorgallery.com. (If you go, peek in the nearby

Chemline apparel studio to see a dramatic vertical garden that makes the tiny space feel like a terrarium.)

The budget-minded shopper looking for modern décor might check out I Squared and (Sub)Urban Home. I Squared is the lower-priced offshoot of the Interior Illusions stores in West Hollywood, Santa Monica and Palm Springs. Clean-lined original furniture and lighting are mixed with less-costly imitations of recognizable classics by the likes of Philippe Starck and Charles Eames. At (Sub)Urban, owners Ronnie Gene and Beatrice Ricarti cater to shoppers seeking basics that are a bit more Hollywood than Hidden Hills. Upholstered armchairs detailed in glam pyramid-shaped nail head trim (\$1,095 each) are big right now, and Gene expects bold new African wax-print pillows (\$65) to sell well. Big looks come with relatively modest prices; (Sub)Urban's lidded decorative ceramic containers start at \$18, glass vases with a mosaic effect start at \$29, and most other accessories are less than \$50. I Squared, 758 S. Spring St., (213) 817-1053, www.interiorillusionshome.com. (Sub)Urban, 101 W. 5th St., (213) 243-5881, www.suburban-la.com.

For European classics, there's Novecento. The store that developed a cult following for exquisite vintage Italian design closed on La Brea Avenue and reopened downtown in May. The collection spans decades and styles: Shoppers might see a 1920s inlaid walnut jewelry box (\$450), a 1950s glass Venini chandelier (\$1,400) or 1970s industrial metal-and-plywood Castelli chairs (\$2,900 for a set of four). 910 S. Olive St., (213) 622-7700, www.novecento-1stdibs.com.

The consumer who seeks luxury linens should consider a stop at Matteo. Look for a building near the Los Angeles River that is covered in repurposed pallet slats — a clever sign of what's inside this popular purveyor of high-end but practical linens. Matthew Lenoci's 15-year-old company makes almost everything to order in the basement. Though it has been selling to designers, retailers and hotels, Matteo just opened as a retail store. "Our retail customer is a luxury customer, and to get them to come to the river is a challenge sometimes," a spokesman for the store said. But the number of cafes and shops in the neighborhood has been growing. Retail prices start at \$60 for a queen-size, garment-washed 225-thread-count cotton sheet and rise much higher. The company also sells loungewear and a line for babies too. 912 E. 3rd St., (213) 617-2813, www.matteohome.com.



For affordable gifts, there's Realm. This emporium of glassware, teapots, picture frames, vases and other house wares opened more than four years ago in Chinatown and remains a favorite for Asian-accented contemporary design. The selection leans toward the cheery and cheeky (think potted cactuses rendered in white porcelain), and most everything costs less than \$100. 425 Gin Ling Way, (213) 628-4663, www.realmhome.com.

But wait, there's more: design items at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Walt Disney Concert Hall and Japanese American National Museum stores; tabletop pieces and trinkets galore throughout Little Tokyo; modern carpet-tile maker InterfaceFlor and the Sliding Door Co. near Staples Center. The destinations are numerous and change frequently, so the best plan of attack just may be to wear comfortable shoes and see what your feet discover.



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