



The Perks of Portland

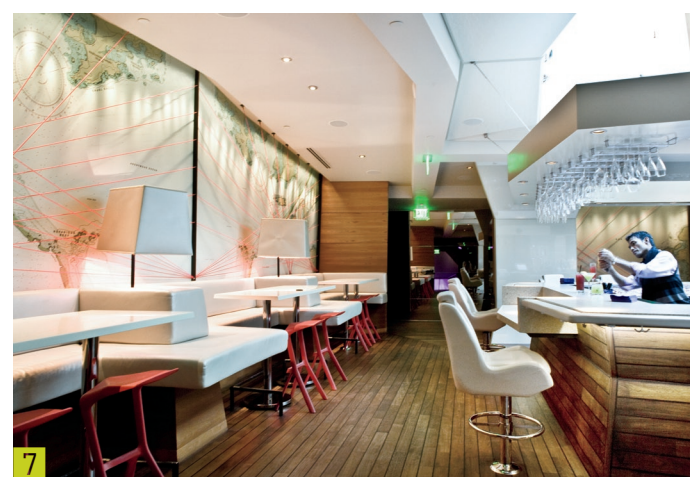
Creative talents and independent minds have forged a bulwark against boredom in America's greenest city

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It's not surprising that Portland is a design-driven city, with top-shelf creative firms such as Nike and Wieden + Kennedy calling it home. What's surprising to outsiders is that the people shaping the scene have little to do with these recognizable names. Rather, it's the emerging architects, designers, craftsmen, and artists who are driving the city's cultural growth. "Portland is a very accessible city for young creatives," says noted architect Jeff Kovel of Skylab Architecture.

Kovel and others have carved out spaces for artistic expression in each of the city's main quadrants. Take the gritty Eastside: Kovel put the area on the map in 2004 with his **DOUG FIR LOUNGE**, an offbeat restaurant, bar, and live music venue whose design could be defined as '50s modernism meets cosmopolitan truck-stop diner. In the upstairs bar, onion rings, burgers, and "Grandma's Meatloaf" are served, while the downstairs lounge hosts rock shows for a late-night crowd.



Next door, the 80-room **JUPITER HOTEL** looks like it was lifted from a '60s California postcard. Also open since 2004, the hotel was a design collaboration between Skylab and owners Kelsey Bunker and Tod Breslau, featuring recently updated guestrooms with modern headboards made from Ikea-like furniture, mod chandeliers, hand-painted wall murals, and Rothko-esque bright colors.

The workers who frequent the Jupiter for happy-hour drinks labor nearby at **1 BSIDE6**, a new, seven-story office building. Designed by Works Partnership Architecture with Le Corbusier in mind, the project inhabits a simple concrete frame that creates four window-filled façades, interspersed with "city rooms" that offer views of downtown at its best.

Elsewhere on the Eastside, newish developments such as the former food bank called The Hub are home to lifestyle boutiques, including the hybrid florist-décor shop **8 INK & PEAT**. Clientele frequent this light-filled boutique to browse country-chic wares that include rustic pottery, letterpress greeting cards, and brightly patterned pillows.

Nowhere in Portland is the design scene so centralized as

it is in the Westside's posh Pearl District. Formerly a shady neighborhood characterized by dilapidated warehouses, this pedestrian-friendly, art-loving community is now marked by high-rise condos interspersed with exceptional dining locales. There's one restaurant that only vegetarian denizens won't travel to—**4 BEAST**. With an intimate, tiny setting of two communal tables framing an open kitchen, the restaurant boasts a "frank appreciation of meat." Chef Naomi Pomeroy creates weekly menus and keeps them to six-course, prix fixe dinners with only two seatings per evening. Menus have included potato-leek soup topped with maple-glazed bacon and chervil salsa, and shredded rabbit over spätzle. For another helping of dessert, stop at one of two locations of **10 CACAO**. Owners Jesse Manis and Aubrey Lindley, boast what they call "chocolate prêt-à-porter meets chocolate haute." The shop has more than 35 kinds of the sweet stuff, offered in both chewable and drinkable form.

Elsewhere in the Pearl, modern furniture stores like **3 HIVE** feed the decorating desires of local loft owners, while the **MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY CRAFT** invites contemplation about

design with rotating exhibits and public programs, complemented by monthly First Thursday gallery walks and annual shows dedicated to contemporary art, including fall's Time-Based Art Festival.

Nearby is the West End, a budding shopping district sandwiched between the Pearl and downtown. Here, young professionals peruse the wares at **CANOE**, a modern home shop with a stock of simple, functional products. Close by is the headquarters of **2 ZIBA**, a design consultancy, built in 2008 by Holst Architecture. The firm used native Douglas Fir throughout the 53,000-square-foot LEED Gold-certified space, keeping up with the city's renowned environmental standards. There's even an auditorium open for public events.

Just a few blocks away sits the soulful **9 ACE HOTEL**. This smart, nostalgic renovation of a 1912 hotel stretches an entire block and has 79 rooms flaunting vintage décor and wall murals from emerging artists such as street artist-skateboarder Brent Wick. An adjacent event space known as The Cleaners hosts regular events such as the bike-themed party, Artcrank.

Within walking distance from the eco-chic Ace Hotel sits

THE NINES HOTEL, which houses Kovel's 9,000-square-foot **7 DEPARTURE RESTAURANT + LOUNGE** features a new-millennium sheen, softened by an ocean-liner motif and Asian cuisine. The polished wood-paneled dining room has nautical map murals, marine-inspired teak decking, and an outdoor space that offers arresting views of downtown. Also located downtown is a veteran hot spot, **SAUCEBOX**, where, since 1995 chic patrons have gathered for cocktails, as well as pan-Asian and Pacific Island cuisine.

Still need some retail therapy? Then **6 RELISH** on the Northwest side is worth visiting for another round of shopping. This modern-home boutique attracts shoppers with an affinity for local green goods such as architect Jeanie Lai's line of felt jewelry, runners, and coasters.

Nike and gang may have set the stage for a burgeoning design scene, but it's the under-the-radar individuals like Lai who are taking Portland to the next level. Says Kovel, "There's a low barrier of entry here, allowing for many early-career opportunities for self-expression." So far, it's proven to be a winning design for success.

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