



Golden Touch

Vancouver, Canada's design darling, finds itself front and center for the 2010 Winter Olympic Games.



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Vancouver, British Columbia, takes everything in stride. It's a temperate city—both in climate and in the attitude of its citizens. But just because it's a stark personality contrast to most major metropolitan areas, doesn't mean a savvy design scene is lacking.

If design encompasses the art of reinvention, then Vancouver knows all too well how to re-create. The city was completely rebuilt after a fire leveled most of the downtown area in the earlier part of the 20th Century. So the façade of this Canadian city, in most respects, seems quite young.

With vigor on its side, Vancouver kept its design industry contemporary and local, so visitors looking to feed their craving for design won't be left wanting. The city offers a broad mix of stores that run the gamut from antique to crafty to contemporary and chic, all set in newly gentrified neighborhoods.

To get an insider's perspective of Vancouver's design scene, we handpicked local experts to tell us what 'design hits' are a

must when visiting "Van": Patricia Gray, acclaimed interior designer (Patricia Gray, Inc.); Omer Arbel, creative director of Canadian firm, Bocci; and Jan Halvarson and Earl Einarson of the popular design blog, Poppytalk. Their suggestions will have you traversing most of Vancouver's individual neighborhoods—the best way to soak up every corner of the city's culture.

All three of our experts recommend making the trip to the **2 MUSEUM OF ANTHROPOLOGY**, one of architect Arthur Erickson's masterpieces, at the University of British Columbia. From the museum's Great Hall, you can take in a floor-to-ceiling view of the Point Grey cliffs. Arbel calls the museum "a real contribution to international modernist discourse."

When you're ready to make your way downtown, stop by the **15 VANCOUVER LIBRARY SQUARE**, designed by Moshe Safdie. This seven-story structure, surrounded by a free-standing elliptical wall, features reading areas accessible by bridges and a roof-



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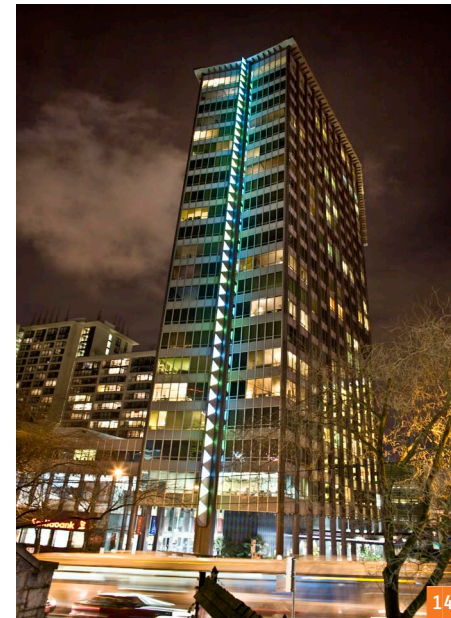
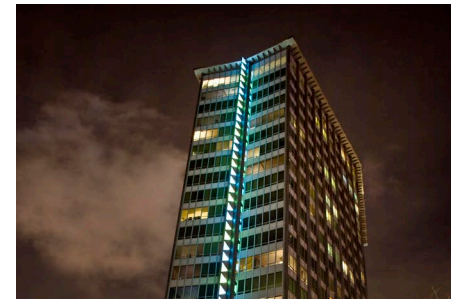
turned-public-garden. And since you're already in the tiny neighborhood of Crosstown, you should take the opportunity to visit **11 PROVIDE**. Recommended by Poppytalk for its selection of organic interior accessories, Provide's clean space is filled with abstract art, fashionable clothing, and even kimonos by Human Nature that add to the store's tranquil atmosphere.

From Crosstown you can easily walk to Yaletown, where you'll find two of Gray's favorites—**9 LIGHT FORM** and **7 THE CROSS DÉCOR AND DESIGN**. Gray shops at Light Form for the "latest and greatest in 'designer' lighting fixtures because their products are international cutting-edge." She calls The Cross Décor and Design, "the hip place to shop" and says "their packing rivals Tiffany's." The beautifully expansive store has a 1914 heritage mark and features exposed beams in the ceiling and 5,000 square feet of luxury bedding, lighting, bath products, and vintage furniture.

While you're still in the relative downtown area, you might

head up to Gastown, named after infamous local, "Gassy Jack," a late 1800s saloon owner. Stop in at **8 INFORM INTERIORS** and be carried away by its four-floor showroom with "the usual suspect brands," according to Arbel, including Philippe Starck, Isamu Noguchi, and Eero Saarinen. But they carry other pieces that are more "magical and special" as Arbel notes, such as the the "Sponge" chair, designed by Peter Traag for Edra. Another wonderful perk is the architecture library filled with every book or magazine you could want on the subject.

Granville Island is always a definite destination in any guidebook on Vancouver. It's not an island *per se*, but rather a peninsula that juts out into False Creek, filled with markets for artisans, food, and flower merchants. Within the Net Loft Building on "the island" lies a store called **5 PAPER-YAI** that Poppytalk says is "the place to go if you're looking to find anything paper related." Here, you're certain to find ornate and decorative supplies for your office: pens, seals, stamps,



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and origami materials. Once you’ve made your way into the Granville area, you can stop at **12 18 KARAT** for “contemporary products inspired by nature.” The store originally designed and imported floral containers for large volume users, but has since grown into the place for tabletop, textiles, and lifestyle products. Gray says the store’s accessories are “simple and totally unique” and adds she recently purchased a Selenite crystal log set for a client.

On the other end of the scale, the Vancouver antique stores don’t disappoint. **10 PANACHE ANTIQUES** by Granville Island is a good one to hit up if you’re looking for pieces from the 17th through the 20th Century, such as an exquisite shrine cabinet from the Meiji period. Gray has an understandable soft spot for this store—the owner gave her her first job back in the 80s—yet Gray wistfully mentions a “Lalique chandelier circa 1920 that I am coveting.” You’ll also want to visit **4 ARCHITECTURAL ANTIQUES**, recommends Arbel. This glimmering maze into the

past boasts the largest lighting collection in North America, and they perform restorations on the premises. Beautiful gramophones are scattered throughout the store, among unusual pieces like an 1860 four-arm gas fixture and a 17th Century Celtic castle sculpture.

The next store suggested by both Arbel and Poppytalk is **13 VANCOUVER SPECIAL**, a relatively new store named after the infamous house design from 1965-85 in Vancouver, Arbel says, adding: “Finally a young *and* intelligently curated design shop in Vancouver!” If you continue on the same street for another few blocks, you’ll reach **3 THE REGIONAL ASSEMBLY OF TEXT** that Poppytalk recommends for original papergoods designed by the owners. The tiny shop has an “old office” look with wooden and metal file cabinets, and a collection of vintage typewriters—perfect for their monthly letter writing nights. If you’re nostalgic for the days when typewriter font was the standard, then you’ll find yourself a couple hours later having forgotten

what’s next on your schedule. It’s a paper junkie’s dream come true. Last but not least is **6 LIBERTY**, a design store cultivated with strict taste by its managers, so when you step inside, it immediately feels like an Alice in Wonderland-world infused with shades of black, white, and purple that make stuffed crows, modern gothic chairs, and table linens shine.

A must-see when the sun goes down is the **14 BC ELECTRIC BUILDING**, renamed “The Electra” when its lights are turned on. Originally built for BC Hydro, one of Canada’s largest electric utilities, the building was a collaboration between the modernist architect Ron(ald James) Thom and the painter B.C. (Bertram Charles) Binning, who designed the blue and green porcelain mosaic tiling on the lower floors.

Closely situated near the airport, check out the recently completed **1 RICHMOND OLYMPIC OVAL**. The city took sustainability to a new level when it decided to use local, resourced pine trees to create a “wave roof” for the structure. The links

of wood panels create an undulating, rippling effect, a unique touch for the 2010 Winter Olympic Games. But that’s just another example of Vancouver’s willingness to think innovatively and in the present.

Vancouver may be considered a quiet, placid city with a “take it as it comes” attitude, but its design industry holds its own next to the larger ones south of the border. And yes, it may be architecturally young, but Vancouver definitely doesn’t feel naïve. Globally aware and culturally receptive, you realize why Vancouver makes perfect sense to hold the upcoming 2010 Winter Olympic Games, a melting pot of cultures, athletes, and *some* design. Vancouver is ready to show the world that creativity flourishes best in a city where ingenuity is proudly upheld.

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