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Boutique Bliss

As thoughts turn to the holiday shopping season, we hit the streets to bring you dispatches from San Diego's bustling boutique scene. From a Bird Rock surf shop to a Mission Hills purveyor of organic pet products to a Del Mar boutique whose inventory of designer clothing outshines that of some more-celebrated department stores, we cover the retail spectrum. Let the shopping—and vicarious window shopping—commence.

JULIA BEESON POLLORENO | PHOTOGRAPHS BY PATRICK COSTANILLA



Capricorn

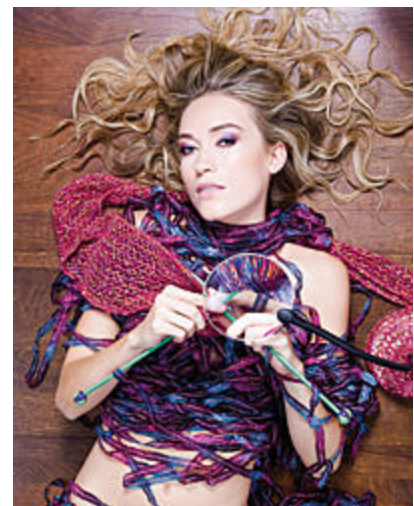
CAPRICORN

Upscale yet unpretentious, this midsize clothing and gift boutique in Bird Rock is a refreshing alternative to the cooler-than-you ethos at equally trendy counterparts. The shop interior is playful but stylish, with checkered flooring and turquoise wall paint; a lounge area with a fireplace and plush vintage chairs at the back of the shop encourages shoppers to settle in for a spell. Guys can pick up Modern Amusement's lightweight wool sweaters, Hozell tees and outerwear staples by WeSC. Charlotte Ronson dresses are a popular pick with female shoppers, as are the reasonably priced cotton shirts by Fluxus and silk frocks in bold hues by Christopher Deane. Check out the strappy shoes and shirtdresses by out-of-the-box Australian label Hussy, hats by Christy's London and bohemian-inspired jewelry designs from n.om. And a note for your holiday shopping list: The Jonathan Adler candles make great gifts for guys and girls.

5544 La Jolla Boulevard, 858-551-2660

THE GROVE

Housed on a quiet street in South Park, The Grove is part bookstore, part knitting shop, part gift boutique—and entirely endearing. It stocks an array of titles, from classics to the latest bestsellers. (The shop also periodically hosts authors for book signings; author Victor Villaseñor was here in September.) The homey space houses an area devoted to all things knitting—yarns, patterns, needles, buttons—as well as a selection of fabrics (find the popular Amy Butler prints here). There's no shortage of gift-giving options. One corner is filled with children's toys, clothes and accessories (The Lily Pad Store sells its fine, handcrafted, eco-friendly wares for tots), and there's a variety of jewelry, apparel, home décor, art, cards, stationery and other inventive items. The Bamboo Store, which



recently opened adjacent to The Grove, sells home and garden décor made from bamboo.

3010 Juniper Street, 619-284-7684,

thegrovesandiego.com

FIREFLY

Yoga teacher and fashion designer Carrie Gerstl stocks stylish yoga togs and loungewear, as well as swimsuits, in her artsy Mission Hills boutique. Cute ensembles from Brazilian brand Bellissima, Beyond Yoga, Couture Activewear and Yoga Tribe & Culture carry yogis from downward dog to dinner with the girls. There's a selection of yoga mats and bags; cotton-canvas bags by via mia stylishly double as purse and gym tote. Other popular picks: Spiritual Gangster's graphic tanks and tees with song lyrics (think Bob Marley and Michael Franti) and messages (PRACTICE PEACE or ORGANIC SOUL) printed across the front; Havaina flipflops (with or without the Buddha charm and Swarovski crystals); and yoga-inspired dog collars from om my dog.

928 Fort Stockton, Suite 107, 619-299-4359,

catchthespark.com



Bird Rock Surf

BIRD ROCK SURF

Ride the wave of anti-corporate, chain-surfstore sentiment right into this killer Bird Rock boutique. Owned by surfer brothers and BR natives Ben and Matt Murphy, the shop just celebrated its one-year anniversary. In addition to all the beach-going essentials for guys, girls and kids—flip-flops, graphic tees, board shorts, sunglasses and sundresses—the store sells leashes, wax, surfboards and most any tool surfers need to practice their craft. Drop in for organic tees by Hippie Tree, a wide selection of Rip Curl wet suits and surfer lifestyle-inspired shirts from Glas, or browse the newly expanded board room for a new stick. The small size of the shop and its family-run ethic translate to personal, friendly customer service.

5544 La Jolla Boulevard, 858-459-9200

GERHARD

Lanvin, Louboutin and McCartney, oh my! Tucked away in Del Mar Plaza, Gerhard stocks women's apparel and shoes from the most prestigious (and expensive) designer labels, including the aforementioned Lanvin, Christian Louboutin and Stella McCartney, as well as Alberta Ferretti, malo, Gianfranco Ferré and John Paul Gautier. Gerhard is the only shop in San Diego that carries Herve Leger, and also has a head-spinning selection of shoe designs by Robert Clergie (and did we mention those Louboutins?). There's also a wide offering of tseyay sweaters and tops for the fall, and James Perse's tissue-paper-soft tops (a closet staple). If you seek exclusive designer merchandise not available even at Neiman Marcus—and "budget" isn't necessarily in your vocabulary—this is your place.

1555 Camino del Mar, Suite 315,

Del Mar, 858-481-9709

HOWLISTIC

Dubbed "a natural, holistic and organic dog wellness center," this Mission Hills pet boutique caters to design-minded dog owners (check out the stylish Jax and Bones bedding and the sleek wood-and-chrome food/water

systems) and those who think their pooches should live just as healthy and enviro-friendly as their human families. Among the eco-wise products are hempbased dog collars and toys and West Paw Designs' bed mats stuffed with recycled material. There's an assortment of organic doggie treats, as well as all-natural pet-care products such as shampoo and toothpaste. Four full-size, in-store refrigerators house Yoghünd organic frozen yogurt for dogs and raw food from a variety of vendors. The store also carries numerous dry-food lines for both dogs and cats.

**914 West Washington Street,
619-255-7317, howlistic.com**

FACEVALUE

Dubbed “a lifestyle boutique for all,” this smallish Little Italy storefront carries streetwear and footwear geared largely toward the X Games crowd. Among the fashion-forward, skateboarder-inspired clothing: graphic T-shirts by Truth and RVCA, Truth Soul Armor shirts and hoodies, and streetwear designs by WeSC, Creative Recreation and Chula Vista-based Guttersnipe. The shop's interior décor is urban-minimal (concrete floor, clean lines and a black-and-white color scheme), a design intention that “lets the product be the art,” according to co-owner Shane Beidler. Among the art/footwear on exhibit: shiny red vinyl hightops by Supra; a rainbow array of sneaker designs by New Balance (got gold?) and Reebok; and the Converse by John Varvatos line. The shop is also the only place in San Diego where you can pick up Common Project's street shoes.

**1760 Kettner Boulevard, 619-231-1943,
facevalueshop.com**



Facevalue

LOU'S RECORDS

There's a reason why musicians—including our cover boy, Jason Mraz—love Lou's: It's all about the music at this no-frills, funky Leucadia shop offering an impressive selection of new and used CDs, LPs, tapes, DVDs, VHS and LaserDiscs. Jack Johnson periodically drops in for an impromptu performance at Lou's, known for its grass-roots support of buzzworthy acts and local musicians (San Diego band Rocket From the Crypt is a top seller). From hard-to-find imports to Top-40 tracks, the shop stocks it all. The staff is knowledgeable, and the two buildings—one for used, one for new merchandise—are easily navigable. For those who prefer their tunes on vinyl, there's also a selection of turntable cartridges and styluses.

**434 North Coast Highway 101, Leucadia,
760-753-1382, lousrecords.com**

KINGDOM

High style reigns supreme at this Hillcrest boutique for guys and girls. Owner Domenick Gallo stocks the latest trends in apparel, shoes and jewelry, including items you won't find in any other San Diego boutique. Clothes fit for a king: Shirt by Shirt's breezy linen button-downs, artificial flavor hoodies and a wide selection of hussy T-shirts. Indulge an inner princess with dresses from Development by Erica Davies, T-shirts from Edun and Spiders & Caviar, purses and bags by Orla Kiely and Hobo International and colorful scarves from A Peace Treaty (a hot trend, especially entering fall). The shop also stocks PF Flyers canvas shoes for women and men, as well as shades from Spy Optics and Salt. Non-fashion finds include the Korres Beauty Line, Jack Black Men's skincare products and Lafco NY candles and soaps.

3696 Fifth Avenue, 619-298-5464,

kingdomsandiego.com



Vitreum

VITREUM

Takao, the owner of this East Village fine giftware boutique, sells his delicate glass vase designs—inspired by ikebana, the Japanese art of flower arrangement—and a variety of quality items created largely by Japanese artists. Pick up Blue Bazar tableware, ceramic bowls and handcrafted ironware, traditional Japanese tea sets, sake cups, wall décor illustrated with Japanese script, handmade aromatherapy soaps and lotions, high-end watches and jewelry. A major focal point of the boutique is the large-scale, black-and-white nature photography by David Fokos, also available for purchase. Like his glass creations, Takao's shop reflects a Zen-minimal aesthetic that is simple yet sophisticated.

917 E Street, 619-237-9810, vitreum-us.com

KATE ROSS SHOES/KALOS DESIGNS

Get your kicks at this North Park home-design shop and shoe salon. Kate Ross supplies the high-end foot candy for guys and girls; Kalos Designs complements with equally delectable items for the home or office. At the front of the industrial space (no-frills, urban-cool concrete and plywood flooring), the focus is the shoes. For women: Pour La Victoire's colorful French-inspired heels, dolce vita sandals, strappy numbers by Pink Studio and colcci and Sam Edelman flats and gladiator sandals. She-shoppers can also pick up Anana's leather purses and clutches, along with the latest jewelry trends (love the clunky cocktail rings). For men, there's an array of Ben Sherman shoes, Dekline street shoes, as well as the do-good designs by Tom's Shoes. The eclectic home décor throughout—check out the delicate glass orbs and ceramic pots filled with mini succulent gardens—and ethereal acrylic-on-wood paintings by artist (and shop co-owner) Amy Paul definitely warrant a visit. Make sure to also check out the large inventory of letterpress cards and stationery.

2827 30th Street, 619-501-6318,

shopkateross.com

LITTLE BABY BIRD ROCK

This high-end children's boutique (yes, in Bird Rock) is the go-to shop for moms and dads who want their kids' wardrobes and wares to be stylish and functional. There's an array of kiddie clothing, shoes, gear, décor and furniture all arranged just so in the airy, sunny space. Find the must-have Ergo baby carrier, Little Giraffes'

plush bedding and blankets and Elegant Baby accessories, toys and fine gifts. The Charlie Rocket boys' clothing line is one of the shop's top sellers; for girls, it's all about Mimi & Maggie. Other unique and utilitarian finds: Lily Couture baby-wipe containers and Pee-Pee Teepees (for moms of diaper-wearing boys). And if you're in the market for an organic burp cloth, look no further—the shop carries a variety of organic products. Little ones will stay occupied in the play area—complete with an aquarium occupied by a colony of colorful fish—while parents shop.

5663 La Jolla Boulevard, 800-753-5227,

littlebabybirdrock.com

ROSAMARIPOSA

A large wooden sculpture emulating flames greets visitors to this exotic new Little Italy shop, which imports jewelry, clothing and art from Indonesia. The shop's cheery lime-green façade, accented in brown-and-turquoise trim, sets the tone for a Technicolor twirl through vibrant island culture. Strands of multicolored wooden beads overflow from woven baskets; silk scarves and cover-ups in gorgeous batik designs dangle from a clothing rack. Chunky rings, necklace chains and bangles fashioned from coconut shells are just a few options in the shop's offering of eco-wise, sustainable jewelry. Hand-carved wood bowls, sculptures and wall art depicting Buddha are dispersed throughout the boutique. The distinct woody aroma further transports shoppers to the Indonesian tropics for a unique retail experience.

611 West Fir Street, 619-237-8064,

rosamariposasd.com

SARA ELIZABETH SKINCARE & NAIL BOUTIQUE

Clients of Sara Elizabeth Skincare leave the stylish Mission Hills hot spot with radiant skin, polished nails and must-have beauty products from her in-house boutique. Sara Elizabeth Kuite carries a number of handpicked, high-end skin-care lines, including TRUE, Astara, Pevonia, Priori and Medicalia. Not sure which one is right for you? Skincare expert Kuite will help find the just-right products for a specific skin type. She also stocks the latest in Spa Ritual's vegan, nontoxic line of nail polishes and products (check out the new scrub and masque). Other popular purchases: luxurious pajama sets by Bed Head, cute cosmetic clutches, jewelry designs by Elisa Gonsalves, organic baby products and bibs, Cielet Mar candles and elixr health tonics.

4026 Hawk Street, Suite H, 619-977-7546,

saraelizabethskincare.com

SCOTT JAMES

This fun and kitschy East Village boutique has a loyal following of customers who know this is the go-to shop for eclectic gifts. There's a plethora of creative gift ideas: original artwork (John Brooks' is popular), home accessories and décor, handbags, candles (from Zinnia Soy and Trapp), jewelry, watches, frames, glassware (martini sets!) and more. There's also a wide selection of very un-Hallmark greeting cards (snarky, not sappy). Check out the blinged-out belt buckles and fun fashion sunglasses. Shop owner Rich Honea will personally help customers select the perfect gift, and assures shoppers they won't find their Scott James purchase at any other gift shop or mall in town.

915 E Street, 619-696-0910,

scottjameseastvillage.com

SOUL SHINE

Considered more of a community living room than a boutique, the retail space of this Del Mar wellness center sells gifts and goods that promote physical, emotional and spiritual health. It's an eclectic mix: herbal teas, baskets of essential oils, natural skincare products (R.D. Alchemy is one line), candles, incense and books on Zen meditation, yoga, Rumi poetry and Deepak Chopra titles. The shop also stocks some high-end apparel, including Krisa's bamboo-soy bean/silk-blend dresses, Buddhaful's graphic tanks, Leucadia-based Kipendo's cotton peace-sign tanks and Freddy B tops and dresses. A range of jewelry, from whimsical charm necklaces to semiprecious-stone rings, is also for sale.

**1217 Camino del Mar, Del Mar,
858-793-1907, soulshine.com**

STATION

Little Italy window shoppers are drawn into Station by the eclectic French-modern décor, the cool beats streaming from store speakers and the displays of stylish wares for both home and wardrobe. Interior-design mavens make this their stop for designer pillows from Henry Road and Lauren Saunders, as well as stylish lighting (love the nature-inspired lamps) and tabletop décor. Fashion-savvy femmes can pick up Fluxus' cotton-jersey tees and dresses and current designs from Ella Moss and Tulle. For guys, the Modern Amusement shirts and Arnold Zimberg button-downs are top-sellers. Station also carries a range of accessories, including Stacy Buckley's jewelry designs and funky belt buckles. Another draw is the in-house nail boutique, Papillon, which really makes Station a one-stop shop.

**414 West Cedar Street, 619-544-1100,
stopatstation.com**

Credits

facevalue

- Jedidiah "Buttons" women's fleece (\$64)
- Jedidiah "Love" women's burnout tee (\$32)
- Creative Recreation "Cesario" vintage shoes (\$92)

Bird Rock Surf

- Ezekiel Locs V-neck T-shirt (\$26)
- "Surf Through Life" surfboard (\$560)

The Grove

- Louisa Harding sari ribbon (\$11 per hank)
- Swell Knits kid mohair scarf (\$32)

Capricorn

- Hussy pintuck posie shift dress (\$362)
- Sheila Fuji coral cocktail ring (\$136)
- Anana's patent leather satchel purse (\$310)

Vitreum

- Bonsai tree (\$32)
- Assorted origami (\$8 per piece)

- Chopsticks (\$5)

Patrick Costanilla (photographer)

patrickcostanilla.com

Michelle Mason (model)

iModel & Talent

Daven Mayeda (makeup artist)

davenm.com

Sienree Du (hairstylist)

sienree.viewbook.com