



Hidden Gems

Five Los Angeles designers reveal
the city's best-kept secrets.

As told to CLAIRE BUTWINICK

After my most recent trip to LA, I thought I'd seen it all, and flew home convinced that there was little depth beneath the storied city's glimmering façade. Turns out, I just wasn't visiting the right places. When I spoke with five LA-based creatives working in various sectors of the design industry—from fashion and product design to architecture—it became clear that the City of Angels was far more than I'd thought, and my preconceptions of the place had barely scratched its surface. From transportive taco joints and quirky vintage retailers to secluded midcentury residences and beautiful rooftops (even on parking garages), Los Angeles isn't a gilded myth—it's a diverse and genuine city full of groundbreaking creatives, and hidden gems are scattered among all its world-renowned treasures. You just need to know where to look.

Owl Bureau



Casa Perfect

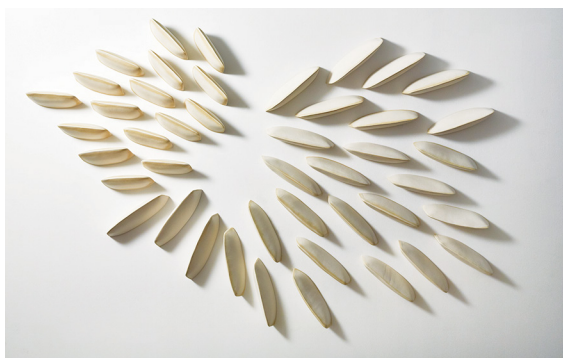


HOPIE STOCKMAN
Cofounder, Block Shop Textiles

“Los Angeles is full of architectural contradictions that inspire [me and my cofounder/sister, Lily Stockman, at right in photo]. We look at Art Deco flourishes on buildings like the **Eastern Columbia** and the geometric details on Mayan Revival buildings such as **Hollyhock House**—austere as that space is—and the **Mayan Theater** downtown. There’s something wild, liberating, and even humorous about the fact that it’s all mashed together alongside swaths of strip malls here in LA.

Many LA businesses are still relatively small—mostly bootstrapped, self-financed, and working out of warehouses scattered around the Eastside, so there’s this sense of creative freedom that comes with being right here, right now.

I’m loving **Owl Bureau** [bookstore] in Highland Park. The shop is by **Chandelier Creative**, and its book selection is as heavenly as its furniture, which was designed by our friend Shin Okuda of **Waka Waka**. A stop at **Hauser + Wirth** gallery, followed by lunch at neighboring **Manuela**, is always an afternoon treat. The Future Perfect’s **Casa Perfect** [design gallery] in Beverly Hills is stunning and hosts inspiring events. **Individual Medley** is our favorite local clothing boutique, and it’s a stockist of all things Block Shop! **Hostler Burrows** gallery recently opened an LA space designed by architect Linda Taalman, another friend.” »



Hostler Burrows



Individual Medley

ALEXANDRA LOEW

Founder and creative director, Alexandra Loew

“We have a vibrant museum and gallery scene here. My current favorites are the **Nonaka-Hill** gallery, the **Pavilion for Japanese Art** at LACMA, designed by Bruce Goff, and the **Institute of Contemporary Art** downtown. I also love hiking in this city—it’s a great way to clear my head, tune out the noise, and feel the seasons, which of course shift pretty subtly here, but they’re glorious if you pay attention. I also try to catch everything by the **LA Dance Project**. The city has a richness that pulses just below the surface that may be overlooked in the fascination with shiny things. Street tacos and salsa dancing are two ways to experience the city’s diversity and creative, joyful expression.

I love [antiques showrooms like] **JF Chen** and **Blackman Cruz**, but my new go-to is **Sonia Boyajian’s** shop. She’s a jeweler but just introduced lighting and mobiles. They’re fanciful and refined.”



Blackman Cruz



Nonaka-Hill



LACMA

AZA ZIEGLER

Fashion designer, Calle del Mar

“I was in New York for six years before I landed in Echo Park, renting a backhouse from a friend of a friend, and I just fell in love. It’s a wacky community of people who are very much just themselves. Everyone’s really authentic and doing something they love. It’s the right place for my brand.

Something I love about LA is that there’s an amazing community of people structuring their lives the way that they want to. There are so many moms who run brands, and artists who have furniture companies—there’s room for lots of multilayered people in LA. Life is made a little easier, and I find that inspiring.

I have an incredible vintage dealer, Tommy Dorr of **Moth Food**. He has a showroom in Mount Washington and a great collection of vintage denim. I follow a lot of individual [design studios] like **Entler**—they have the coolest lamps. There’s also a cool furniture store in Atwater called **Grain** and a cactus shop called **Cactus Store**.” »



Moth Food



Cactus Store



Entler





Objects for Objects



Elyse Graham



Ross Hansen



LEAH RING

*Multidisciplinary designer and founder,
Another Human*

"There's still a sense that anything is possible in LA, as well as an interesting creative spirit—this feeling that whatever you want to do, you can make it work. This is especially true for my furniture design; I can get anything made in LA. There's such a range of styles, which has been helpful for my work, which is pretty out there."

I feel really fortunate to be a part of the design community here. Everyone is supportive, sweet, and hustling. We're all ready to lift one another up and keep gaining recognition for LA as a great design city. I feel like we're just picking up steam. As my peers become more successful, I hope more world-renowned galleries begin to come here. We have the talent; we just need the opportunities.

I love everybody who's been featured in my traveling exhibition series, **Object Permanence**. I really admire [furniture designer] **Ross Hansen**, as well as artist-designer **Elyse Graham**—she's the sweetest person but also a badass woman. [The design studio] **Objects for Objects** is fun, fresh, and playful. They're not afraid to use color. LA is such a beautiful and rich and dynamic city. There's a diversity of culture—there really is something for everybody here."



Highly Likely Cafe



ROW DTLA



Alta Adams



ANDY LANTZ

Architect and creative director, RCH Studios

"So much of LA is about serendipitous exploration and coming across things you'd never anticipated. It's a huge place, so there's always this sense of make-believe. Once I ended up at a garage sale at Miranda July's house and bought a painting from her!

I worked on [office, retail, and dining project] **ROW DTLA** in the Arts District, and my favorite place there is the top of the parking garage because you get a view of the city from its rooftop park. You'll never guess what you'll discover [in LA]. If you wander enough, you'll find plans for your evening.

Near RCH Studios, **Highly Likely Cafe** is a great spot. **Alta Adams** also just opened up, which features Southern fusion food and good California wines. There's another spot in Frogtown called **Salazar**, which is an amazing sensory experience that takes you out of LA—it's an outdoor restaurant adjacent to the LA River, so it's romantic and magical." ✱