


STYLE

Best of 2007

A look back at Austin's most stylish happenings

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IN FASHION

Return of high style

Blame Justin Timberlake, who regularly wears vests and fedoras, or maybe it had something to do with Fergie's catchy song "Glamorous," but 2007 marked the fabulous return of style and glamour. Austinites, who have a reputation for opting for casual jeans and flip flops, caught the fever by embracing dresses, vests, cufflinks, fedoras and polished makeup and beauty products.

Shopping

The options to shop bubbled beyond belief in 2007 with the opening of the luxe shopping destination in North Austin called the Domain, which brought many new retailers to Austin including Neiman Marcus, Louis Vuitton, Bailey Banks & Biddle, David Yurman and Barneys Co-Op. (The Domain will continue to expand over the next year or two with more retailers and restaurants.) Joining the high-end shopping spot in 2007 were the ever-expanding Southpark Meadows, the Hill Country Galleria and the shopping center at the Mueller development.

Old favorites got fresh starts

Despite plenty of new boutiques and speciality shops in the market, several longtime favorites got new blood and fresh starts. Austinite Elizabeth Tigar took over Fetish and its sister store Underwear; University of Texas grad Julie Copp turned an old By George store on the Drag into her C. Jane boutique of women's selections; and Kevin Lemoine and business partner Steve Wertheimer, owner of the Continental Club, took over an old barbershop on South Congress Avenue and renamed it Avenue Barbershop.

Year of the boutique

Austin boutiques and speciality shops such as Peyton's Place, Lotus Boutique, Sana, Bag Girl, Service Menswear, Girl Next Door, St. Bernard Sports and Strut expanded their fashion stakes, found new homes or came on board this year. Meanwhile, several recent stores in the Second Street District (Lucky Soles, Gomi, Sage Salon's second location and Octane) packed up and called it a day. There's a brighter shopping day ahead with new boutiques opening at the Triangle (West Guadalupe Street and North Lamar Boulevard) in 2008.

Talked-about trends

The year was about going green and reusing what we already owned. On the opposite side of the spectrum, though, there was the trash the dress phenomenon in which brides wear their wedding dresses for a roll in the mud or fountain while under the gaze of a photographer. But the bigger trend was about how soy, bamboo and other earth-friendly products could be retooled into clothing. Which trend will have the biggest impact? Eco-friendly fashion, of course.

Blake Mycoskie's Toms Shoes quest

Austin native Blake Mycoskie, the founder of Toms Shoes, fulfilled a major goal. In November, Mycoskie, the Toms crew and the band Hanson went to South Africa to deliver 50,000 shoes to children in need.

Austin's new designers

Austin's established designers such as Linda Asaf and Anthony Nak were joined by a new crop of designers and fashion labels including Julia Plume (who won the 2007 Search for Texas' Next Top Designer competition), Herf Christiansen, Sophie Grace, Analea de la Fuente and Dévushka.

Beauty and style in the media

Austinites and former city dwellers appeared ever so fashionable in reality and contest shows, on shopping channels and in print. There was Chantal Jones, the model who became runner-up on "America's Next Top Model." There was Anthony Camargo of jeweler Anthony Nak on QVC; jeweler Kendra Scott on HSN; hairstylist Allen Ruiz in Latina magazine; Kayci Wheatley of Moxie and the Compound on the "Today" show; Mayor Will Wynn wearing Prada in Esquire; and University of Texas grad Elisa Jimenez on "Project Runway." And how about Brad Womack's appearance as "The Bachelor"? Some people felt the self-made businessman wasted their time by the show's shocking finale (he didn't propose to anyone). At the very least Womack's good looks made it clear that Austin is filled with beauty of all kinds.

Tom Ford's stylish return

Austin-born designer Tom Ford might not stick to his Texas roots, but we're still dazzled by him and his love for all things fashionable. Putting his Gucci days behind him, Ford, who left Austin for New Mexico as a child, stepped up his fashion comeback with an upscale men's line, New York flagship store and two new fragrances. He also appeared in magazines such as Out and launched a racy advertising campaign (see www.tomford.com).

Next on the horizon is a global expansion of his brand.

Factory People out; American Apparel in

In July, Factory People, which played a role in putting Austin on the fashion map, unexpectedly closed its doors to become an online retailer and to give owners Le and Thomas Popov more time to spend with their family. Its high-profile spot on South Congress Avenue — former site of Just Guns — is now home to new Austin fashion player American Apparel, the popular maker of basic goods. Los Angeles-based American Apparel also opened a store on the Drag and an outlet store in Round Rock.

IN HOME DESIGN

Fresh crop of design stores

Our home design cups runneth over, from the flights of fancy at Finch in the Second Street District and the retro-

cool goods at La Luz on South First Street to the perfect blend of traditional and modern at Wendow Fine Living in Central Austin and Heather Scott Home and Design in the Arboretum. Fresh wares for everyone, no matter where you live. Each month, we had another great store to tell you about, and each one offered its unique take on home design.

Mad for mod

Acceptance of modern design has been hard-won in Austin, but it has finally gone mainstream. In March, we explored not only the growing popularity of modern in Austin, but also the scene's national media attention. The players include the architect Dick Clark (who was at the forefront of the movement), as well as architecture and design-build firm Cottam Hargrave, Chris Krager and the designers at the design-build firm KRDB, Amy Dempsey at Studio Robins Dempsey and Kevin Alter, principal of Alterstudio Architects LLP. Their work has quickly become a part of the landscape of Austin, with more projects to come. The wealth of design stores offering pieces that look right at home in these modern digs is a sign that this style is here to stay.

Botanicals, birds and bugs

Spring is always in bloom with the bevy of goods sporting bird, insect and botanical motifs. We can't get enough of the sprigs, twigs, bluebirds and bees on everything from pillows and tableware to stationery and linens. It started in 2006, and the trend continues into this year. In addition to the whimsical and vintage-looking sketches of blooms and feathered friends that we've grown to love, Art Nouveau and Victorian takes on the theme are on our radar.

Going green

In Austin, going green isn't a new concept. The Austin Green Building Program is nationally recognized and is one of the oldest programs in the country. But we ever-competitive Austinites continue to find new ways to stay ahead of the movement. Some of the 2007 eco-highlights covered in these pages included the "This Old House" remodel of Michele Grieshaber and Michael Klug's home; go green events, such as the Austin Green Living and Home Products Expo and the Sustainable Shopper's Ball; and an interstate coffee with Josh Dorfman, the Lazy Environmentalist, whose standing-room-only talk and book-signing during the Texas Book Festival proves that we are still eager to learn more about what we can do for Mother Earth.

Design inspiration

Last year brought us delicious interiors from all over the world. "Vogue Living: Houses, Gardens, People," by Hamish Bowles (\$75, Knopf), of Australia's Vogue Living magazine, was not to be outdone by "So Chic: Glamorous Lives, Stylish Spaces," by Margaret Russell and the editors of Elle Decor (\$40, Filipacchi). On a local note, "Hacienda Courtyards" marked the seventh volume of Mexican design books by Austinites Joe P. Carr and Karen Witynski of Joe P. Carr Design, a gallery and design firm (see more in Style Matters, E3).

Preppy

Comfortable, high-quality, practical and classic are the principles of preppy style, a look that will never go out of fashion. In 2007, what's old became new again with a resurgence of preppy for the body and the home not seen since its heyday in the 1980s. Boston interior designer Annsley McAleer, formerly of Beaumont, cautioned us to be careful with prep, as some of the brighter, more colorful looks can overwhelm everyday spaces. She says Kate Spade is the goddess of current preppy style, so always ask, 'Would Kate approve?'

Interior design legislation

In May, we reported that the Texas House killed the bill that would have limited interior design practice in public

spaces to licensed interior designers. Later, three Austin decorators, Vickee Byrum, Joel Mozersky and Veronica Koltuniak, along with Houston decorator Nancy Pell, filed a lawsuit challenging the state's 1991 interior designer title act, which limits those who can use the title interior designer. Licensed interior designers in favor of the proposed new legislation cite that they are trained in health, safety and welfare and are qualified to draw and develop specifications and create non-load-bearing elements of buildings, whereas unlicensed decorators are not. Decorators contend that many have the same training as (or more than) a licensed designer, often working in tandem with architects or building designers. The two sides are primed to continue the debate in 2009 during the next legislative session.

Locally made furniture

It's no secret that Austin is overflowing with creative people in every genre. This makes it even easier to buy everything from food to furniture locally. And Austin's local furniture makers offer hand-crafted, often custom-made pieces that are sure to become prized family heirlooms. The creations of Phillip Sell, Wells Mason and Michael Yates graced the style section in 2007. These three woodworkers honor local and statewide vernacular by using native materials, but their distinct modern styles are far from Texas traditional.

Design for a good cause

Local designers and decorators showed their true spirit of giving through charity events, such as the Symphony Designer Showhouse and the Lifeworks Home Improvement Challenge. Net proceeds from the Showhouse, now entering its 26th year, go to the Women's Symphony League of Austin for the Austin Symphony Orchestra and its programs. The 2-year-old Lifeworks event pairs decorators, interior designers or design novices with corporate teams to decorate the apartments of 11 youths working toward a fresh start. Some area designers participate in both events.

Return to refined

For years, the trend toward more casual interiors has reigned supreme, but as trends often do, it has come full circle. Monogrammed linens and glassware, fine china, crystal and flatware found its way not only into product mentions, but also into the homes we've featured throughout the year. Austin design junkies, such as pillow designer and Heritage Society of Austin member Kate Hersch, whose personal art, antiques and tableware collection we profiled in April, are scooping up heirloom pieces to add to their cache of funkier, more modern items. We've learned the fun way that whether your aesthetic is traditional or avant-garde, refined and high-quality are always in style.

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