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CS 200 W HUBBARD ST CHICAGO IL 60654



BY THE EDITOR

Gem-trification

West Town goes from sketchy to seriously happening as one of the city's hottest troves for cutting-edge design

By Amalie Drury | Photography by Greg Gillis

West Town may seem like the quiet place where artists—and designers, photographers and graphic-design firms—came when they got priced out of Bucktown and Wicker Park. But inside the old loft buildings and warehouses is some of the hottest design not just in Chicago, but perhaps in the entire country. An Arik Levy

lighting show? Forget River North. It happened here at Wright auction house. One of the city's hippest home stores? Ditto: West Town's Post 27, with its modern-meets-sustainable take on home design chic, is the current darling, attracting everyone from New York magazine editors to first-time homeowners looking to add a unique piece to a startup collection.

In just a matter of a few years, the area has grown from what Richard Wright calls "sketchy, crime-wise" when he first signed a lease in 2000 into a burgeoning community of like-minded enterprises. "Most design-oriented businesses tend to be destinations," Wright says. "Our physical location isn't that important, so we're able to go to interesting neighborhoods that aren't as obvious. And the more of us there are, the more likely it is that people will come check it out."

Grand Avenue's latest additions include well-known businesses, like Urban Modern, Andrew Hollingsworth and Modern Times, that have

migrated from other neighborhoods. Davide Nanni, business manager at Salvage One (a sprawling Hubbard Street loft building filled with vintage furniture and reclaimed architectural artifacts, and widely considered one of the design daddies of the neighborhood), says logistical considerations are part of what brought his and other design businesses to West Town. "It's two blocks from the expressway, with easy access to downtown and River North," he explains. "It's easy for people to find us, and all of the extra space makes it easy to load and unload large pieces."

"West Town has an edgy new feel," says Christopher Racana, whose family has owned European Furniture—now a mostly e-commerce business dealing in contemporary furniture from designers like Kartell, Dellarobbia, Cattelan Italia and others—since the early '80s. "It's right on the cusp of blowing up. But even though there's been some gentrification,

the neighborhood has, so far, retained its soul."

According to the owners of both new and established design-oriented businesses in the hood, that soul has a lot to do with the relationships they've formed with one another. Brandon McCleskey, co-owner of Uber Modern, moved his business from Ravenswood to West Town last August and saw an immediate increase in business, thanks to the support of his fellow entrepreneurs. "With places like Wright auction house, Nate Berkus, Urban Remains and Salvage One pioneering the neighborhood, we hope to keep building the momentum as a draw for shoppers and design-industry pros," he says. "And people like Angela and Barkley from Post 27 and Martha and Tom from Modern Times have been extremely helpful in promoting us. You can be certain that if a New York customer visits one of these businesses on Grand Avenue, he'll leave knowing about the other two." ■

Uber Modern

2256 W. Grand Ave.
580.302.1072



Vintage finds at Uber Modern: A Paul McCobb sideboard for Calvin Furniture and an Adrian Pearsall lounge chair for Craft Associates.

European Furniture

2145 W. Grand Ave.
312.243.1955



Polyethylene puppies by Eero Aarnio and cat chairs by Javier Mariscal for Magis Me Too. LEFT: The first-floor gallery at European Furniture.

GRAND AVENUE

FERDINAND STREET

WESTERN AVE.

OAKLEY AVE.

LEAVITT ST.

HOYNE AVE.

DAMEN AVE.