

DC MIDCITY

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RETAIL THERAPY

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C.A.T.Walk Boutique 1000 H Street NE

Fashion pioneer Carolyn Thomas opened her trendy boutique just before the H Street renaissance began in earnest. Since then she has quietly become a destination for fashionettes “willing to try” a bit of whimsy with their work uniform. Carolyn believes wholeheartedly in the democratizing power of personal style to elevate and empower regardless of income. Therefore, it is with great pride that she features reasonably priced wholesale vendors from Los Angeles (Ryu) and international fashion upstarts from Belize (Black Heart), Japan (Kai Aakmann), and Australia (Skunk Funk). We especially like the champagne-tiered heavy jersey and mesh cap sleeved dress by South African based Coleen Citizen. The jersey fabric like the C.A.T.Walk Boutique is quite remarkable. One size fits all.



C.A.T.Walk Boutique, a fashionette destination on H Street



Japanese 4-button options at Why Not boutique

Why Not Boutique 1348 U Street NW

Mississippi native, computer engineer, and former Army commander Larritus Jackson opened Why Not boutique in 2002. Specializing in ready-to-wear “work, play, pray” options for peacocks (men who like to be seen), Jackson is one of DC’s most consistent trend forecasters for men. He was the first to realize that the urban market was ready to trade in its denim for a slimmer, sophisticated silhouette. Virtually overnight he modified his inventory to include more tapered, fitted suits from Europe, Japan, Turkey, and China. A dandy since high school, Jackson possesses a strong fashion ethos. He believes that stylish people can and should design for themselves. Liam Michael is a case in point. Jackson encouraged this customer to create a line of bespoke men’s shoes. You can find the Liam Michael dress shoes next to the Larritus Jackson branded ties, shirts, and lace ups. Why Not, indeed?

Skynear – 2122 18th Street NW

For over 25 years the Skynear design showroom has been located in a charming Adams Morgan row house that goes up and back, seemingly forever. Proprietor Lynn Skynear, a journalist and former correspondent with ABC, designed

the shop to look and feel like the home of your coolest globe-trotting aunt. The result is the most eclectic mix of artisan works and modern home furnishings anywhere in the city. Because 60 percent of featured art work is one of kind, it is not surprising that the National Endowment for the Arts recently selected Skynear as one of the (two) top “American Art Places” in Washington. I recommend a slow and thoughtful meander to avoid missing any of the witty accessories placed throughout. On the first floor be prepared to encounter an enormous aqua Murano glass chandelier, a whimsical Romero Britto chess set,



Skynear design showroom combines function and whimsy.

and a coffee table made of 100-year old North Carolina driftwood. The second floor is likewise a veritable wonderland. It features Innovation Living sectional furniture, a crimson chair made entirely of seat belts, a life-size sheep sculpture, and Britto paintings inspired by current Redskins quarterback Robert Griffin, III, and go-go legend Chuck Brown. Stunning, surreal, and within the city limits. What’s not to love?

Mercedes Bien Vintage 2423 18th Street NW, 2nd Floor



Mercedes Bien, still setting the vintage standard

Typically, trolling through a vintage boutique requires a hearty breakfast and comfortable shoes. Mercedes Bien Vintage, the oldest vintage shop in the District, is the exception. The eponymous owner with a degree in textiles from the University of Maryland has so carefully edited her merchandise that treasures can be found everywhere. Look to the left behind the glass jewelry cases and you can find pristine 1950 cashmere sweaters embel-

lished with pastel colored beads, crystals, and mink. Lace bustiers, full slips, and Pucci girdles with garter stays akin to the kind worn by Elizabeth Taylor in “Butterfield 8” can be found hanging on the lower racks to the right. And then there is a marvelous, mod, multi-colored trench coat by Mary Quant hanging on the wall! DC shopping never ceases to delight, darling.

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