

VANCOUVER

Vancouver is a rare metropolis imbued with natural serenity, blending international savoir-faire, Asian influences and humble Canadian bonhomie. The nation's third largest city is still quite young, with a history of environmental awareness and activism. Sprinkled with independently owned shops, restaurants and galleries, Gastown and Yaletown are some of the hottest neighborhoods, and Granville Island retains its charm despite its touristic atmosphere. —A.G.



Shop SECRET LOCATION

On the cobblestone streets of trendy Gastown, you'll find Canada's first concept store, featuring a mix of men's and women's fashion as well as beauty products, accessories and housewares curated by founder and creative director Carey Melnichuk. Her style is bold and multicultural, which is reflected in the offerings — think Canadian tuxedos and floral kimonos with quality craftsmanship and responsible production tying it all together.

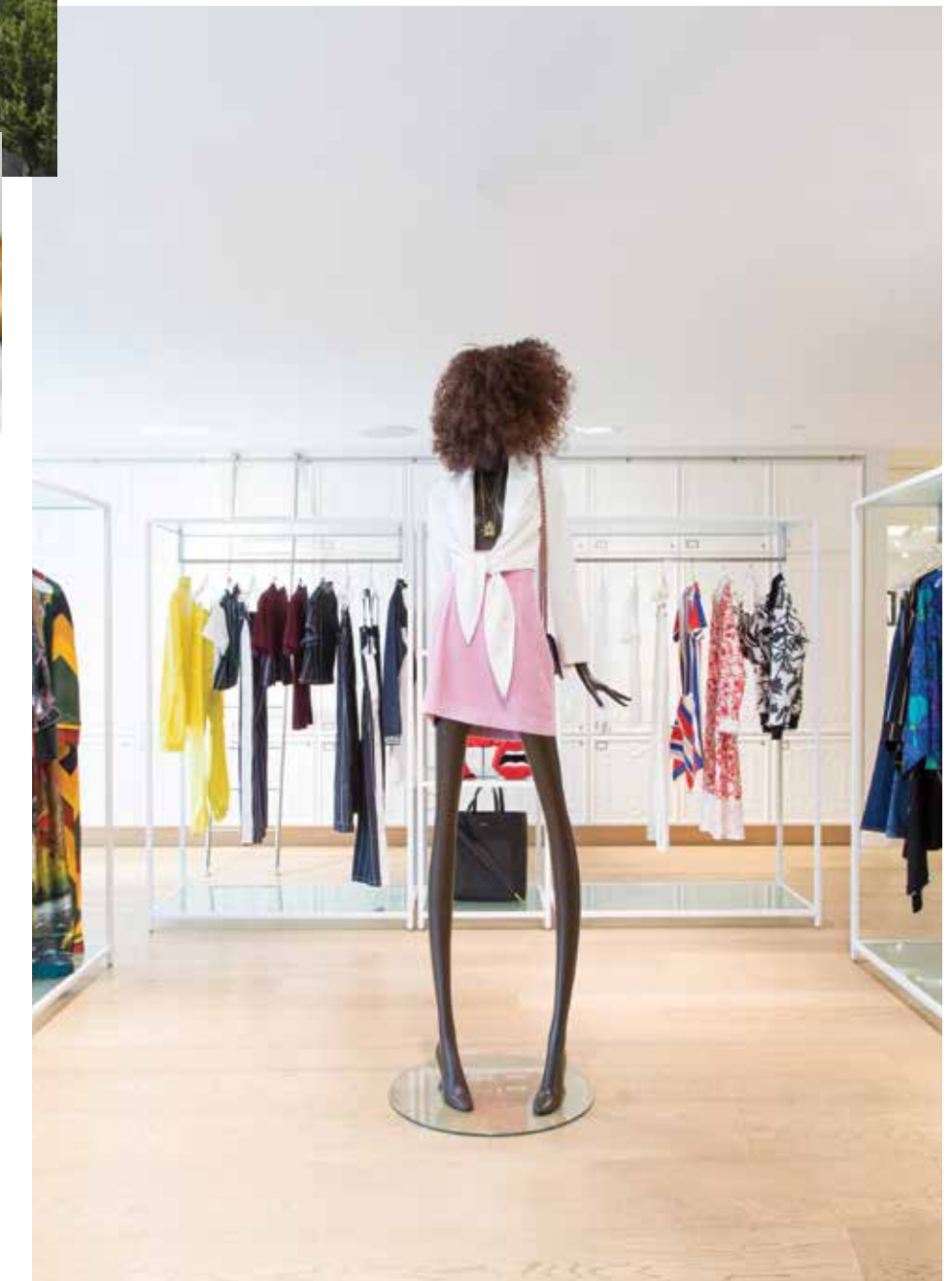
Most recently, Melnichuk released Secret Location's first capsule collection. The seven pieces range from a timeless suit and asymmetrical blazer to cheeky tees and loungewear. "These are classic pieces with a bit of *Toscana moderna*," she explains. Melnichuk, who studied fashion design at the prestigious Istituto Marangoni in Milan, visited Italy to select fabrics and help design the items. Who could have guessed that the girl who grew up on her family's British Columbia cattle ranch would follow her passion for art and design to become one of Vancouver's foremost fashionistas? secretlocation.ca



Stay FAIRMONT HOTEL VANCOUVER

Fairmont's iconic Castle in the City is once again the premier luxury property in town. This spring, the hotel celebrates its 80th anniversary with the unveiling of a luxurious new Fairmont Gold experience featuring 42 renovated guest rooms and a new lounge serving complimentary continental breakfast and afternoon tea. Over the past few years, all 557 guest rooms have been renovated, and a new lobby and contemporary Canadian restaurant have been unveiled.

Heritage suites up on the 14th floor have been resurrected with romantic, gilded grandeur, including new carpeting, marble flooring and restored millwork. Queen Elizabeth stayed here during the hotel's grand opening in 1939, and many heirloom design elements from that era have been preserved, including bronze gateways and English hawthorn doors. Canada's flagship Dior boutique as well as Gucci, Omega and Louis Vuitton outposts are all located on the lobby level for modern retail therapy, plus canine ambassadors greet guests upon check-in. fairmont.com/hotel-vancouver



Dine BEAUCOUP BAKERY & CAFÉ

The scent of butter and coffee marry in sweet ecstasy at this small bakery in Kitsilano (locally known as Kits), which turns out the best croissant in North America. Taste inventive pistachio and rice pudding croissants or savory butternut squash and balsamic pear tarts with walnut sage pesto. Pair your cappuccino with classic cookies in flavors like buckwheat chocolate chip and dark chocolate rosemary.

Owners Betty and Jacky Hung took over last year, and the young sister-and-brother duo is a natural fit. Betty started as a pastry intern when Beacoup opened in 2012 and received one of the bakery's scholarships to train at the famed Ecole Gastronomique Bellouet Conseil in Paris. The shop's unique Acts of Kindness loyalty program allows regulars to earn points and pay it forward to strangers or provide lunches to Liberian schoolgirls through nonprofit More Than Me. beacoupbakery.com



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