



LOOK HERE

BY
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Head-to-toe runway re-creations are a thing of the past for Bay Area boutique owners, who now load their digital sites with personal, neighborhood-driven interpretations of each season's looks.

PHOTOGRAPH BY TOM HOOD | INSET PHOTOGRAPH BY SCOTT HAMMEL



TOP: On location in Stern Grove at Welcome Stranger's shoot for its spring/summer lookbook. INSET: One of the images selected for the final product.

The number of times we've all wailed "I've got nothing to wear" in front of a full closet is more than a little embarrassing. And iPhones filled with fashion apps don't help: The sites feature fall clothes in the spring and highlight runway pieces that aren't wearable on the street (unless a chauffeur hovers nearby). Luckily, San Francisco boutique owners are here to assist with lookbooks, Tumblr pages, and blogs that communicate a truly ready-to-wear, city-centric, and in some cases neighborhood-centric aesthetic. Individual designers have long had their print lookbooks, but the new twist is that shops are combining looks from multiple fashion lines to showcase their style sense and to help actual people figure out what to wear. (After all, a Mission artist might do something very different with those Rag & Bone jeans than a Marina PR rep would.) And, inspired by the region's infamous microclimates, most of these stores are showing what to wear right now instead of following production-calendar mandates. So when you're ready to debut a coat in April or shorts in October, click on these sites.

WELCOME STRANGER (463 Gough St., 415-854-2079; WELCOMESTRANGER.COM) is the brainchild of Brian Ortega, a former Gap employee who wanted to create a men's clothing store that reflected the city's culture. The result is a mix of brands that includes James Perse, A.P.C., and Norse Projects. "It's a mix of things that you'd see on the streets of San Francisco," says Ortega. "It's not a 'here's what you should wear' kind of store."

Welcome Stranger

463 GOUGH ST., 415-854-2079
WELCOMESTRANGER.COM



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Welcome Stranger customer Jason Kendig poses in the store's eponymously labeled designs. He's wearing a waxed-canvas safari jacket, wool checked shirt, indigo jeans; chambray shirt, southwestern print wool vest, twill chinos, eelhide bag; quilted chambray vest, navy-and-white polka-dot shirt, twill herringbone chinos.



Playful **Azalea Boutique** stocks the quintessential French line A.P.C., cotton T-shirts by Los Angeles's **James Perse**, and heritage label **Penfield**. For men, **Welcome Stranger** carries **Norse Projects**, **Gant Rugger**, and an eponymous private-label line. **Rand + Statler**, the most upscale of the three, sells **Shipley & Halmos**, **Spur**, and beautiful dresses and knits from **L'Agence**.

THE LOOK & THE BOOK: Corina Nurimba and Catherine Chow co-own three boutiques, each with a distinct personality. Azalea Boutique attracts shoppers in their 20s with items such as **Naked & Famous** scratch-and-sniff jeans (with a raspberry scent), so its Tumblr is particularly fun. It includes video clips, called AzaleaTV, that showcase each staffer's individual style and favorite foods or merely feature the subject making funny faces in time to music. For more serious fashion hounds, Rand + Statler offers **New Scotland** cashmere sweaters and **Pamela Love** jewelry, and its sophisticated Tumblr reflects these grown-up leanings with interviews of favorite designers and clever photo spreads grouped by such themes as what to wear on a rainy day. Welcome Stranger, stocked with men's outerwear and hoodies, features its in-house line in a rugged local lookbook that's produced twice a year.

THE LOCAL TWIST: Inspired by the local fashion scene and our unique weather, the **Welcome Stranger** private-label line includes salvaged indigo denim and waxed outerwear to fend off foggy chills. AzaleaTV features local bloggers like Laura Ellner (ontheracks.com) and Annabel Ly (blushingambition.blogspot.com), who give inspiration and sartorial advice.

Rand + Statler

425 HAYES ST., 415-634-0881
RANDANDSTATLER.COM



Shopgirl Betsy Johnson sports an A.P.C. cape and a brim by New Scotland for her rainy-day staff pick on Rand + Statler's Tumblr.

Azalea Boutique

411 HAYES ST., 415-867-5668



TOP: Staffer Brian Ortega dons his perfect weekend outfit: a duck shirt and jeans by Naked & Famous. BOTTOM: In Azalea Boutique's jeans-wearing competition, called the Wear & Tear challenge, male employees were asked to wear different pairs of Nudie jeans every day for six months to see which ones fade better. Photos (pictured) also appear on the blog.



ABOVE: Jenny Chung's photo stories demonstrate how to style new inventory. Here a model is shot in UNIF motorcycle pants, Back by Ann-Sofie Back shirt, and American flag moto-jacket by L.A.-based UNIF.

"I think the blog helps display potentially odd pieces, because styling is the hardest part of shopping."

—JENNY CHUNG OF ACRIMONY



NEIGHBORHOOD
HAYES VALLEY

Acrimony

Acrimony caters to men and women equally with collections by androgynous Korean designer Kai Aakmann and American prep line Gitman Bros., plus its Sisters spin-off collection. His-and-hers Miansai bracelets are also featured.

THE LOOK & THE BOOK: A playful jumble of photos, style advice, and store updates. Acrimony's well-written blog mirrors the boutique's smart, modern aesthetic. Each staff member highlights in-stock favorites, shares current inspirations, and posts photos of his or her individual style. Owner Jenny Chung posts weekly outfit combinations to show clients how to mix and match various pieces. "Recently, I did a twin-themed photo shoot with my doppelgänger intern that showed the two of us in chunky knitted sweaters, scarves, and gloves," Chung says. "I think the blog helps display potentially odd pieces, because styling is the hardest part of shopping."

THE LOCAL TWIST: When Chung noticed the colors exploding in her clients' closets, she decided to bring back black for spring, even though other boutiques look like Crayola boxes. "Color is cyclical, because everyone gets really into it; then they look in their closets and realize everything is colored," she says. "Black is wearable, and people always need it in their wardrobe." She also picks many neutral pieces and colors that can be worn at least three different ways. This simple but edgy philosophy attracts those who appreciate sharp tailoring and avant-garde fashion.

303 HAYES ST., STE. 100, 415-861-1025
SHOPACRIMONY.COM

ACRIMONY: PHOTOGRAPHER: CODY BROWN/SENSE MODEL: RUBI LOCATION: ACRI
CURVE: PHOTOGRAPHER: CODY BROWN/SENSE MODEL: RUBI HAIR: ALEXANDRA MARIA MAKEUP: GLORIA NUTOLI MODEL: LAUREN HANSTROM
HAIR & MAKEUP: GLORIA NUTOLI MODEL: LAUREN HANSTROM



Curve

Innovative and playful labels like Isabel Marant, Christopher Kane, Alexander Wang, and Preen hang inside this pristine boutique.

THE LOOK & THE BOOK: Owner Nevena Borissova loves the juxtaposition of high and low—sequins and ripped denim can coexist in one look here. Each season Curve produces a themed lookbook to highlight such unusual combos: The most recent was an ode to Kurt Cobain and '90s grunge. Daily blog posts and seasonal lookbooks keep customers abreast of new inventory and how to wear it. "Everyone who works here has a styling background, so we try to provide head-to-toe looks down to the bag, necklace, or scarf," says manager Jennifer Dietz. Clients may or may not run to the grocery store in rocker-esque Iro trousers, but they regularly don Valentino and Alexander McQueen gowns for city galas. Racks are currently crammed with leather and knits in bright colors for spring layering.

THE LOCAL TWIST: Curve, which launched in Los Angeles and then expanded to New York and Miami, opened its San Francisco store this past August. "Right now, we want to push our customers," Dietz says. "Women here like to stay in their comfort zone, but we try to pick pieces they normally wouldn't consider to stretch those boundaries a little bit." It may take some serious nudging to get clients to try spring's bright-denim-on-denim trend.

2360 FILLMORE ST., 415-885-4200
SHOPCURVE.COM

NEIGHBORHOOD
PACIFIC HEIGHTS

Mira Mira

Mira Mira features quirky indie labels not easily found in San Francisco, such as Parisian brand *Gat Rimon*, British label *To Be Adored*, and L.A.'s *Laugh Cry Repeat*.



THE LOOK & THE BOOK: In the boutique, racks are filled with the sort of embellished tights and high-waisted jeans worn by every Valencia Street girl on a bicycle. But Mira Mira also challenges customers to try something new; its debut lookbook (launched last fall), featuring lace minidresses and chiffon blouses, pushed the shop to the forefront of the Mission style scene. "I wanted to communicate the essence of the shop because we were only six months old at the time," says owner Mira Pickett. Shot in the city, the lookbook reflected Pickett's perspective. "San Francisco girls are casual but sophisticated—I call it the undone-bun look," she says. Pickett's lookbooks, shot seasonally, show what real people are wearing right now.



FROM TOP: Pickett launched her first lookbook in tandem with her boutique's fashion show, and everything featured sold out. Here the model rests in a silk skirt and cardigan by Hy + Dol, Sheila B. cocktail ring; dress by MyPetSquare, Navajo leggings by Thief & Bandit; To Be Adored dress, Mink Pink cardigan, necklace by Georgia Vardakas.

"San Francisco girls are casual but sophisticated—I call it the undone-bun look."

—MIRA PICKETT OF MIRA MIRA

THE LOCAL TWIST: When this past October was sweltering, Pickett kept summer inventory up and only brought out a few fall pieces to help her clients mix in seasonal items. She also supplies customers for unusually cool summers. "I stock skirts and shorts that can be worn alone or over tights. That way, if you venture over any of the bridges, where it's warmer, you don't have to buy new clothes," she says. "I want pieces to last through many seasons."

3222 22ND ST., 415-948-6513
MIRAMIRAF.COM

PHOTOGRAPHER: LAUREN BLOKER; STYLIST: MIRA PICKETT; TARA MORGAN; HAIR & MAKEUP: GEORGIA NEW; MODEL: LISA MCGLYNN; LOCATION: BAY FRANCISCO; PRODUCED BY JOE BIANCHETTA



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Metier's blog began with images snapped by its shopgirls in their spare time. The girl in midair is wearing Current/Elliott jeans, flannel shirt and boots by Isabel Marant. Other shots: Dress by Rag & Bone; dress and crewneck sweater by Vanessa Bruno; Current/Elliott jeans, Equipment top, Golden Goose sneakers.

NEIGHBORHOOD UNION SQUARE

Metier

T-shirt-inspired luxe labels like *Alexander Wang*, *3.1 Phillip Lim*, and *Rag & Bone*.

THE LOOK & THE BOOK: Metier's blog feels like playing dress-up. It's crammed with photos of shopgirls modeling new wares like sheer *Equipment* blouses, worn-in *Golden Goose* boots, and slouchy *T by Alexander Wang* pullovers, and it functions as the boutique's ever-evolving lookbook. Art director Rebecca Goldschmidt credits the blog with fortifying the boutique during the last few years. "We realized the importance of it when the economy crashed in 2008, because we could still reach out to our clients," Goldschmidt explains.

THE LOCAL TWIST: A city staple for 20 years, Metier is immersed in San Francisco fashion. Describing the boutique's wares as "classy and elegant," Goldschmidt and owner Sheri Evans believe that San Francisco style is more lighthearted than other cities. "New York fashion is trend-based and black and linear, and that's not going to work here," Goldschmidt says. "We buy for fashion-loving people who are on the move throughout the city all day long."

365 SLUTTER ST., 415-986-5306
METERSF.COM

