



# LOOKWHERE

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.



**T**he 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

400 DOUGH ST., 415-854-2079  
WELCOMESTRANGER.COM



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Welcome Stranger customer Jason Kending 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, cowhide bag; quilted chambray vest, navy-and-white polka-dot shirt, twill herringbone chinos.

PHOTOGRAPHS: SCOTT HANAUER, WELCOME STRANGER; STYLING: LISA LUNNEY; MODEL: JASON KENDING; PHOTOGRAPHY ASSISTANT: KAHLEY WAGNER; LOCATION: JEFFERSON SQUARE; RANDO + STATLER MODEL: GUYTON JOHNSON; LOCATION: RANDO + STATLER; AZALEA BOUTIQUE MODEL: BRIAN ORTEGA; LOCATION: AZALEA BOUTIQUE



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**, **Spurr**, 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.

## Azalea Boutique

411 HAYES ST., 415-851-9888



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 **Nude** jeans every day for six months to see which ones fade better. Photos (pictured) also appear on the blog.

## Rand + Statler

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



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





## 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.

300 HAYES ST., STE. 100, 415-881-1025  
SHOPS.ACRIMONY.COM

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

—JENNY CHUNG OF ACRIMONY



*ASYMME: 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.*



ACRIMONY PHOTOGRAPHER: CODY RANAUSSON; MODEL: BRIANNA GLEN; ACRYL LOCATION: ACRYL; JEFF CURVE PHOTOGRAPHER: ALEXANDRA WINT; STYLIST: AMY LASER; ART DIRECTOR: NEVENA BORISSOVA; HAIR & MAKEUP: GLORIA ROTO; MODEL: LAUREN HASTINGS



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Curve's spring/summer lookbook playfully embraces spring's loud colors and voluminous layers. At left, the model is wearing a sweater and slip dress by Alexander Wang. Other shots: Burberry Prorsum coat; MGSM poncho, blouse and boots by Isabel Marant; Trussardi gloves; fur coat, blouse, and jeans by Isabel Marant; Iro shoes.



## 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 gals. 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.

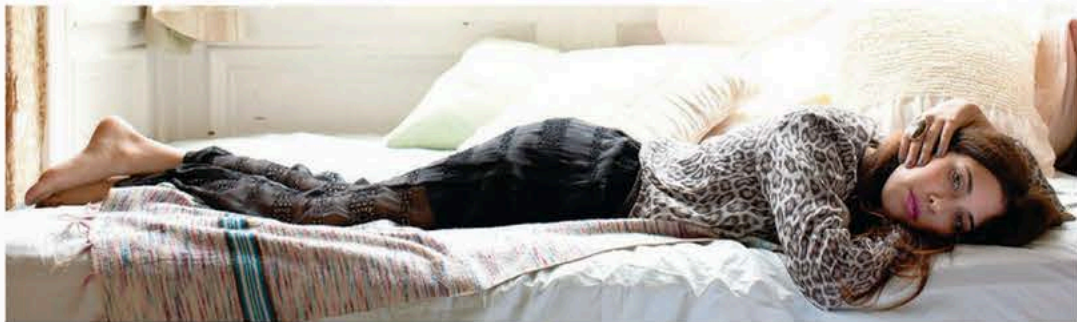
2380 FILLMORE ST., 415-885-4200  
SHOPS.CURVE.COM



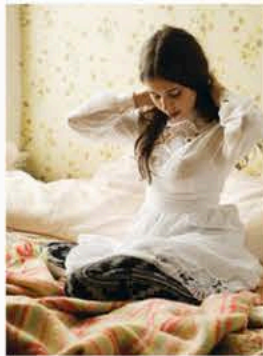


## Mira Mira

Mira Mira features quirky indie labels not easily found in San Francisco, such as Parisian brand [Gal Rimón](#), 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 + Doi](#), [Sheila B.](#) cocktail ring; dress by [MyPetQuare](#), Navajo leggings by [Thief & Bandit](#); [To Be Adored](#) dress, [Mink Pink](#) cardigan, necklace by [Georgia Vardoulis](#).

**"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."

2002 22ND ST., 415-648-0513  
MIRAMIRA.COM

PHOTOGRAPHER: LAUREN STOECKER; STYLISTS: MIRA PICKETT, TARA MORRIS; HAIR & MAKEUP: GEORGIA VARDOLIS; LOCATION: SAN FRANCISCO; PRODUCED BY JOSE RAMONCETTA



PHOTOGRAPHER: REBECCA GOLDSCHMIDT; STYLISTS: JARLEND AND ANNE; LOCATION: UNION SQUARE



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.



## 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 SLITTER ST., 415-580-5305  
METIERSF.COM



HOLLYWOOD  
PACIFIC HEIGHTS

## Elizabeth Charles

"It" designers such as the inventive Guillaume Henry of the French line **Carven**, as well as newcomer **Kevork Kiledjian** and avant-garde **Cushnie et Ochs**, all find their way to this boutique's racks.

**THE LOOK & THE BOOK:** Owner Elizabeth Charles keeps up with the most buzzed-about fashion designers, traveling to Europe, Australia, and Brazil to find new lines for her San Francisco and New York boutiques. Instead of updating a daily blog, Charles emails lookbook-esque newsletters to clients, allowing them to view and buy clothing for the upcoming season weeks before it's available in-store. "We want our girls to be in designers before their friends have even heard of them," Charles says. Her well-heeled customers line up for leopard-print **Jérôme Dreyfuss** bags, **KBL** sunglasses, and **Rick Owens** fitted leather and denim jackets.

**THE LOCAL TWIST:** Charles keeps inventory limited to prevent embarrassing accidental-twin moments at local events (quelle horreur). "It's a small city, so we check with clients to make sure they won't end up at the same gala or charity event with 10 other people wearing the same thing. It sounds ridiculous, but our clients find it reassuring."

2056 FILLMORE ST., 415-440-2100  
ELIZABETH-CHARLES.COM



ABOVE: Curated newsletters inform viewers about what to wear in the upcoming season. The model is dressed in a **Carven** blazer, shorts, and shirt; **Carven** dress.

HOLLYWOOD  
UNION SQUARE

## Downtown

Sophisticated black, white, gray, or beige pieces by Italian line **M.A.+**, Japanese streetwear brand **L.G.B. (Le Grand Bleu)**, and Italian leather goods by **Guidi**.



ABOVE: *Downtown's* blog highlights new arrivals such as this leather and silver tassel necklace by local designer **Geoffrey Young** and **Marvell** prep-toe boots.

**THE LOOK & THE BOOK:** Downtown's shopgirls will flip up a hem, turn a garment inside out, and cocoon the construction of a deceptively basic shift dress. The dark, minimalist design of the shop's blog aligns perfectly with this precise aesthetic, while the posts update its 12,000 regular readers on new inventory and trends. And because of the many Japanese designers carried, including the goth-inspired **If Six Was Nine**, owner Michael Kelter has two team members create daily updates in Japanese. This unique bilingual strategy attracts local clients who have trouble finding Japanese lines in the United States.

**THE LOCAL TWIST:** "We go for very, very modern, clean, and neutral," says Kelter, who bases his label selections on construction and exclusivity (he scours Tokyo for handmade pieces, such as those from his latest discovery, **20,000,000 Fragments**). Responding to the local penchant for comfort and mobility, Kelter also stocks pieces that "won't take 15 minutes to get into or out of."

55 MACEN LN., 415-975-4400  
DOWNTOWNSHOP.COM

ELIZABETH CHARLES: REGIS COLIN BERTHELIER/COURTESY OF CARVEN; DOWNTOWN: PHOTOGRAPHER: JESSICA RIANO; LOCATION: DOWNTOWN

PHOTOGRAPHER: ASHLEY ANTHONY; STYLIST: SASHA DARLING; LOCATION: SILVER LAKE



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: **Frída Kahlo's** signature long dresses and layered jewelry influenced **BellJar's** spring/summer lookbook. The model is wearing a dress by **Funktional**; dress by **Myne**; jewelry by **Belle Noel**, **Rachel Leigh**, **Low Loo x Erin Wasson**, and **Butik**; beaded dress by **Funktional**; jewelry by **Butik** and **Belle Noel**.

HOLLYWOOD  
MISSION

## BellJar

Well-known, vintage-inspired brands that won't break the bank, like **Dolce Vita**, **Covet**, and **Funktional**.

**THE LOOK & THE BOOK:** Owner Sasha Darling's background as a stylist helps her produce elaborate, seasonal lookbooks shot all over the state. For spring, Darling opened her Spanish-style Silver Lake apartment and brought five portraits of **Frída Kahlo** to life. "I wanted to reinvent these portraits because I am inspired by **Frída Kahlo** and the clothes lent themselves really well to her bold, ethnic style," she says. Each lookbook taps into the 16th Street boutique's romantic, of-an-era feel, which currently includes a color palette centered on jade and yellow; silk dresses, and tailored shorts. For a personal touch, Darling frequently updates **BellJar's** blog, titled **Lovely Little Blog: The Glamorous Life of Sasha Darling**, with her own musings and artwork.

**THE LOCAL TWIST:** "Wherever I go, people know I'm from California because I'm wearing color," Darling says. Rather than donning many dark layers, **BellJar** devotees embrace the bright side of San Francisco style with microfibre tights, coats made of Pendleton fabric, and classic blazers worn year-round.

3187 16TH ST., 415-626-1749  
BELLJARSF.COM