

# Quaker Hautes

TOP-FLIGHT GALLERIES IN THE NEWLY MINTED PHILADELPHIA DESIGN DISTRICT BECKON MODERN DESIGN ENTHUSIASTS

THE LIBERTY BELL, INDEPENDENCE HALL, ELFRETH'S Alley, cheesesteaks, sports fans who boo Santa Claus—whatever your mental associations with Philadelphia are, it's unlikely that "modern design shopping destination" is one of them. A group of premier dealers in the Old City section of town aims to change that perception.

Ten galleries and art and design studios, all on or just off the spine of North 3rd Street, have formed the Philadelphia Design District—a kind of mutually supportive commercial coalition. "Philadelphia is changing and growing. There are so many new residential projects," says Eugenie Perret, owner of the contemporary design showcase Minima, and a prime mover behind the PDD. "We have everything here: from furniture, lighting, carpets, shades, and art to flowers." Through the PDD, the merchants can offer each other referrals, and coordinate exhibitions, special events, and sales. "We share the same vision for the neighborhood," Perret says, "but we really didn't know each other before."

Collectors will be familiar with two PDD members from their participation in major East Coast design and art fairs. **Moderne Gallery** is a leading dealer of work from the American studio furniture movement, representing classic artist-artisans such as George Nakashima and Wharton Esher-

ick, as well as contemporary makers like David Ebner and John Cederquist. The gallery's founder, Robert Aibel, has recently added pieces by mid-century artists such as Peter Voulkos and Paul Hultberg, who brought abstract expressionism to ceramics and enamels, respectively. Just up the road, **Wexler Gallery** represents the work of both studio designers such as Wendell Castle and Judy McKie and that of a mix of avant-garde makers of sculptural furniture, ceramics, and glass. Two eye-catchers: Gregory Nangle's leather sling lounge chair with a frame made of individually cast silicon bronze leaves, and ceramist Roberto Lugo's porcelain Hip Hop Bowl III—a witty reiteration of Viktor Schreckengost's famed "Jazz Bowl" of 1931.

**Minima** makes a striking counterpoint to the above. Perret's business operates in two locations. One is an airy space featuring sleek contemporary furniture, lighting, and storage systems. The emphasis is on Italian design—from firms such as Minotti, Porro, and Living Divani—but companies producing modern design classics, like Vitra and Artek, are represented as well. The focus in Minima's smaller, second storefront is on accessories like mirrors, tableware, and offbeat icons such as Ettore Sottsass ceramics.



A view of the Wexler Gallery, featuring the Mass chairs #1 and #2, 2016, and the Mass bench, 2015, all by Moon Imm.

COURTESY OF WEXLER GALLERY / ROSE MCCOBB PHOTO



COURTESY OF MINIMA / ANTELLA KACHNO MEDIA PHOTO COURTESY OF MODERNE GALLERY

Other PDD member stores of particular interest to design lovers include **Parisa Rugs & Décor**, which features both antique Persian carpets and contemporary rugs—including a group designed by proprietor Parisa Abdollahi—along with quirky housewares, like lamps in the shapes of mice and monkeys. **Mode Moderne** is a great place for browsing among pieces by classic mid-century American designers such as George Nelson, Paul McCobb, and Milo Baughman, while at **Kellijane**, the specialty is high-end bedding and other textiles. Owners Claudia and Vincent Roux operate the garden store **Petit Jardin en Ville** in two locations: one offers stylish new outdoor furniture, and at the other you can get a bouquet of peonies—just right for that vase you bought up the street.



The interior of Minima, showcasing the Yang sectional, 2015, and Leslie armchair, 2015, by Rodolfo Dordoni for Minotti, with the System Interparete shelving, 1995, by Piero Lissoni for Porro in the background.

A rare David Ebner low chest of drawers, 1982, from Moderne Gallery.