

TORONTO LIFE

INCLUDES
WHERE TO GET
**GOOD
STUFF
CHEAP**

Shopping Guide 2009

699 OF TORONTO'S BEST STORES



The essential guide to finding amazing outfits, haircuts, manicures, ties, strollers, sofas and, yes, even kitchen sinks—for every budget



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High-end audio is the focus; product lines exclusive in Toronto include ultra-luxe Mark Levinson, Chord Electronics and Lexicon. B&W speakers, Lutron lighting and Runco video equipment are also popular. A particular highlight is the Kaleidescape entertainment server (from \$10,000), which allows you to load all of your DVDs and CDs onto a hard drive, making them instantly accessible from anywhere in your home.

81A Ronald Ave. (at Castlefield Ave.), 416-366-3636. Hours: M-F 10-6, Sa 10-5, Su noon-4.

KROMER RADIO

For 51 years, this dependable downtown electronics store has been selling the latest tech toys, from radios to plasma. Homebodies will fall in love with the high-end Pioneer Kuro plasma television (from \$4,500), which, as with all the plasma screens Kromer sells, comes with the only guarantee in Canada that ensures zero dead pixels on delivery. Car junkies into custom stereo systems, on the other hand, can spend upward of \$25,000 pimping their rides; others prefer simpler additions, such as a Bluetooth hands-free car kit (from \$150) or the world's first "media-free" car head unit (from \$200), which allows the user to stash the player in the glovebox, then control it conveniently from the dashboard. 420 Bathurst St. (at College), 416-920-6700. Hours: M-Th 8-7, F 8-8, Sa 9-6.

SOUND DESIGNS

In the back of Sound Designs' Distillery District showroom are two home theatre areas that would make Tony Soprano jealous. In one room, the screen is perfectly crisp and incredibly bright, and the bass vibrates through your whole body; the chairs are even equipped with sensors that mimic the motion on the screen. Of course, at \$140,000, it may even be out of Soprano's price range. A more reasonable choice is the \$36,000 configuration across the hall, which features a Sony SXRD projector and speakers from B&W (800 Series). Home theatre is certainly a focus here, but Sound Designs carries a range of high-end audio and video products from Sony and Sharp, and the whole store is set up to show off home automation systems from Crestron (from \$10,000). Other cool toys include a programmable universal remote control (\$499) and a mirror with an LCD television (\$1,200) behind the glass.

55 Mill St. (at Parliament St.), Bldg. 58, Ste. 101, 416-364-4800. Hours: winter, M-F 10-6, Sa 11-6, Su noon-5; summer, M-W 10-6, Th-F 10-7, Sa 11-7, Su 11-5.

CUSTOM FURNISHINGS

THE BIG STUFF

Though they've been in the reupholstery business for 16 years, Charlene and Grant Gilmour only catapulted into the limelight in 2004 after the opening of the nearby Drake Hotel. There they worked alongside red-hot design firm 3rd Uncle to create ultra-deconstructionist benches with see-through vinyl tops that reveal their inner structural elements. High-profile commercial projects aside, residential

work is their bread and butter. Expect to pay \$425 to \$525 (plus fabric) to update that armchair inherited from Grandma. If you're not sure a piece is worth the investment, the Gilmours make free house calls. Some clients provide their own materials, but interesting options in a multitude of fabrics are the house specialty.

444A Dufferin St. (at Queen St. W.), 416-921-0696. Hours: by appt.

CABINET

The elegant furniture at this Summerhill showroom—beds, dressers, bookcases, dining tables and consoles—is just the tip of the iceberg. Crafted by fifth-generation cabinet-maker Ron Briand, all pieces are available in multiple sizes and can be finished in 30 different stains. Briand also operates a full-service cabinetry workshop, and custom-makes kitchen islands and window seats. Pieces have a minimalist sensibility coupled with an heirloom quality, including such details as dovetailed drawers and mortise-and-tenon joinery. The solid craftsmanship is evident in simple Edgewood mirrors (16 inches square, \$149) and six-drawer Russel dressers (\$1,975) made from solid Canadian maple.

10 Birch Ave. (at Yonge), 416-923-9234. Hours: M-Sa 10-6.

FINE DESIGN INTERIORS

Second-generation furniture maker Mark Perri and partner Enzo Lalicata bring couch dreams to life at their 5,000-square-foot custom-upholstery workshop just north of the city. All items are handmade using traditional techniques (no staples here; dowels and

screws hold the frames and upholstery) and such luxe materials as kiln-dried local maple and high-end fabrics from Robert Allen's Beacon Hill collection. Approximately half of the business is recovery, including expert antique restoration. Perri has even restored furniture to original specifications using old-school horsehair and straw. After 14 years in business, the duo have outfitted some of the city's toniest venues, including the lobby of the Fairmont Royal York—though you can also lounge on their comfortable work at Gabby's pubs. Sofas start at \$1,700 for a standard foam model. Most pieces are delivered six to eight weeks after ordering.

8241 Keele St., Unit 6, Concord, 905-760-8222. Hours: M-F 9-5:30, Sa by appt.

POTATO SKINS

Saviours of tired and tattered chairs and chesterfields, staff here have been fashioning made-to-measure slipcovers for 15 years. They offer a reasonable alternative to replacing pieces that have been worn down by pets, toddlers and teens. Still hot are coverings in natural fabrics and synthetics that look like linen, textured cotton or suede. Though some clients bring in their own fabric, most make a selection from 100-plus stylish textiles (pre-shrunk, Scotchgarded and machine washable). Pricing for covers (including fabric) without custom fittings starts at \$300 for a large armchair, \$450 for a sofa and \$900 for a sectional couch. Custom covers, which require a home visit, are pricier; they come with tailored arms, piping and zippers.

2073 Yonge St. (at Manor Rd.), 416-484-6299. Hours: Tu-F 10-6, Sa 10-5.



Bev Hisey's collection of brightly coloured blankets and cushions is popular, but it's her hand-tufted rugs that get most of the attention. Working in her Dundas West studio, she dreams up whimsical designs like this one, called Sightlines, which might just spark a new interior design trend: optometry chic. \$2,350. *Hollace Cluny, page 84.*