

Downtown & Chinatown

- 1. Blends/Comme des Garçons Guerrilla Store** L.A.'s downtown might be gentrifying, but it's still the city's grittiest neighborhood, which makes it the perfect backdrop for the only Comme des Garçons Guerrilla Store in the States. It's housed behind Blends—the sun-drenched rare-sneaker emporium that hogs a slice of the block—tucked in the back, down the alley, behind a dingy door. The hand-cracked, tile-lined, windowless room—intentionally threadbare and lit with long fluorescent bulbs—showcases Rei Kawakubo's deconstructed pieces, jewelry from locals, and the full range of Comme des Garçons wallets and fragrances, all carefully arranged on stacked-to-the-ceiling shopping carts. 125 W. Fourth St., 213-626-6606
- 2. Fremont** Named for the strip in Las Vegas frequented by icons like Frank Sinatra and Katharine Hepburn, this line intends to recall an era before sweatpants and flip-flops were the weekend uniform. The slick store, a 2008 addition to L.A.'s slightly dodgy downtown, is known for well-tailored, slightly mod pieces, like Peter Pan-collared blouses in menswear fabrics, and cute pinafore dresses. 120 W. Fourth St., 213-626-1756, fremontapparelco.com
- 3. New High (M)art** Adopting a curatorial attitude to retail isn't new, but this Chinatown arrival does it in a pleasingly amusing, unpretentious way. In its current incarnation, New High (M)art resembles a South American bodega and is all about goods from local designers that evoke a tribal theme. There's a happy jumble of Grey Ant tops trimmed in vibrantly hued ribbon, necklaces crafted out of jump ropes, and sweaters woven from a hundred colors of thread. 741 New High St., 213-621-7822
- 4. Ooga Booga** A pioneer in Chinatown's burgeoning retail scene, this much-heralded space—on the second floor of an industrial '60s office building—is something of a mecca for those in search of forward-thinking clothing from Mociun, Anntian, and Slow and Steady Wins the Race, along with one-off art publications and mix tapes compiled by musicians. 943 N. Broadway, No. 203, 213-617-1105, oogaboogastore.com
- 5. Shareen Vintage** A chalkboard in the front explains that this sprawling warehouse is girls-only (there are no dressing rooms), which adds to the fun, free-for-all nature of a visit here. Plus, a seating area in the middle of the fray is well supplied with Twizzlers and Balance bars, since those who make the pilgrimage tend to stay for hours. Stylist Shareen Mitchell has thousands of '70s and '80s dresses to choose from (she replenishes the array every Saturday), at insanely reasonable prices (most are less than \$50). 350 N. Ave. 21, 323-276-6226
- 6. Welcome Hunters** Designers from far-flung corners of the world are represented at this Chinatown newcomer: Shop for shirtdresses from Copenhagen's Best Behavior, appliquéd asymmetrical tunics from London's Marjan Pejovski, and Munich's Fummel + Kram's hand-embroidered scarves. 454B Jung Jing Rd., 213-687-9905, welcomehuntersla.com

