

What's Hot What's Cool™

VIVA LAS VEGAS

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

CHECK YOUR TOES

WHERE TO BE



Ode to Porcelain

Jewelry designer Ted Muehling's impossibly delicate porcelain orbs, shell bowls and translucent cups are painstakingly manufactured in the famed Porzellan Manufaktur Nymphenburg, one of only two porcelain factories in the world still creating handmade porcelain as they have for 250 years. The heartbreaking quality of the tipped lip of a bowl, the echo of a moon-shell fragment, the curve of a bone-like pitcher are all qualities celebrating the virtuosity of the craftsmen and the seemingly fragile appearance of this remarkably hard and durable material. *Ted Muehling designs, exclusively at Sloan/Hall, 2620 Westheimer, 713.942.0202.*

A Palace fit for a Fashion Shoot

A fashion shoot with as much magnitude as this month's needs an equally compelling fashion fort for the crew, no doubt. While photographing the bright lights of Las Vegas, we settled into The Venetian ResortHotel-Casino as home



The Grand Canal Shoppes at The Venetian

base. With the largest standard hotel rooms in the world (those Guinness World Records people say so), a full-service satellite of the famous Canyon Ranch Spa, restaurants and nightspots by Emeril Lagasse and Wolfgang Puck, and V Bar by the team that gave New York Lotus, our plush palace couldn't have been more complete. While our models checked into Canyon Ranch SpaClub for a posh prep, we went directly to the cobblestone walkways of the Grand Canal Shoppes. Hot shops like Jimmy Choo, Burberry, Wolford, Davidoff and Cesare Paciotti line the waterways, marked with singing gondoliers who converge in a replica of St. Mark's Square. And if you haven't tucked into your seat on the Concorde yet, this is the next best way to

see the baroque architecture of Campanile Tower, Ca'd'Oro, Doge's Palace and the Rialto Bridge. Having shot at V Bar one day, the hip terra haute by the Lotus boys, we cocktailed into the night on the white leather banquettes of the lipstick-red room. But it was the Guggenheim Las Vegas, tucked into the lobby of The Venetian and designed by architect Rem Koolhaas, that beckoned repeat visits. Decked in Frank Gehry's stainless-steel exhibition design, "The Art of the Motorcycle" (running through December 2002) features more than 125 bikes, including the Harley Davidson Easy Rider Chopper and the Vespa from *Roman Holiday*. After all of these diversions, one almost forgets the reason most come to this resort town in the first place, but you needn't worry: The Venetian's 2,200 slot machines and 120 gaming tables fill 120,000 square feet with unadulterated gambling. The flash and dash of this Venice clone served as the perfect backdrop for work (see pages 28 to 32), not to mention the perfect backdrop for play. *The Venetian ResortHotel-Casino, 3355 Las Vegas Blvd. South, Las Vegas, 702.414.1000. Rooms starting at \$149. Karen Sommer Shalett*



Mirror, Mirror on the Wall

Custom mosaic fairy-tale mirrors by Averil Gleason and Blue Domino \$450 to \$850, at Bellini, Brittany Blake Interiors.

Get It In Spades

From opening a store chockfull of travel trinkets in SoHo to launching a luxe letters line, Kate Spade has been a busy girl this year. She's become the Spade of all trades, splashing her signature preppy prints on cosmetic bags, passport pouches, baby frames, Post-it notes and boxed note cards. So don't forget to mark this in your patent-leather planners: Spade will breeze into a Neiman Marcus near you this month to celebrate her latest line, Kate Spade Beauty. Besides an eponymous perfume (\$98), the line is flush with goodies like Buttercream (\$42) and Body Polish (\$30). Cover yourself in Kate until you can do the same for your sofa, when the former *Mademoiselle* editor launches her home line featuring wallpaper, bedding and, of course, her trademarked fabrics in fall 2003. *Kate Spade in person at Neiman Marcus, Galleria, Friday, April 26, information 713.621.7100. Mandy McKnight*



Start Your Engines

It's time to toss your Tank and gear up for Cartier's brand new bauble, the steel-cased Roadster watch. Inspired by the sleek engineering found in illustrious autos, the dial is modeled after a speedometer, with a luminous interior and racy railroad minute circle. This tractable timepiece — designed for the man who prefers his convertible hard-topped — has a steel or gold band that can be interchanged with a leather strap. Be prepared for a waiting list: The Roadster has launched in limited numbers and is bound to be as exclusive as a Bentley. *Cartier Roadster, from \$3,950, at Cartier. Mandy McKnight*



Leaves of Bay

Secretly or not, many foodies dream one day they'll have the moxie to risk everything — the boring but steady job and the reliable paycheck — to open their own restaurant. Gary Fuller dreamed of doing just that. Then six months ago, Kelly Kimberly, his wife, done wrong by Enron, and Fuller, a graduate of the French Culinary Institute with two years knocking around kitchens under his belt, put it all on the line to open a bistro dubbed Laurier Café and Wine. Laurier means "bay leaf" *en Français*, and this aromatic herb falls like autumn leaves across the logo and signage of this casual, food-driven neighborhood eatery, and the tiny flower-filled bud vases scattered on the tables. The theme is simplicity, so



RENON/EVETT

Laurier is outfitted with contemporary art, cushy banquettes and sleek chrome chairs, with walls washed in three bold blocks of primary colors. For the fare, Fuller — the tall, reticent chef/maitre d' dressed in whites, often seen poking around the dining room — created a menu of New American basics. Staples include half a moist, free-range chicken roasted after a rub of herbes de Provence (\$14) and risotto with mushrooms and grilled asparagus, drizzled with luxe truffle oil (\$14). There's also the requisite bistro fare, like steak and frites Laurier (\$20) — in this case, a chili-rubbed New York strip beside a haystack of shoe-string-sized *pommes frites*. Laurier's *carte* drops names familiar to the food cognoscenti (like Niman Ranch), as well as organic this and sushi-grade that. And on days when nothing but dining alfresco will do, they offer an inviting niche fenced in from the fray on the better part of the Richmond strip. *Laurier Café & Wine, 3139 Richmond Ave., 713.807.1632. Laurann Claridge*

Social Skills



RENON/EVETT

I confess I'm not a barfly. I've never felt very much at home teetering on the edge of a tall stool. Yet ever since I drove by the construction of this funky little 1947 Humble gas station turned lounge in the Heights and spied the lemon yellow, lime green and terra-cotta Philippe Starck bubble couches on the patio, I've been insanely curious about this mod place. It turns out Lee Ellis, owner of Tonic, and managing partner Carl Eaves, late of the Daily Review Cafe, are the duo who own the chic little lounge called The Social. Considering the buzz the first week alone, there must have been a lot of people like me who'd been cruising by the place, wondering what lay inside. Tuesday through Friday after work, you can expect a cool Prada-wearing crowd at happy hour. Sunday afternoon you might recognize a few migrants from La Strada, their bodies slung over the black leather sectional and roomy club chairs or sauntering up for a Bloody Mary at the turn-of-the-century mahogany bar, which had the unfortunate fate of spending the last 25 years at a Houlihan's in St. Louis. But I like the vibe here, with DJs like Ziggy from

Mix Master

Taking over the space that was once McClain & Co. art gallery, Evelyn Gorman, owner of Mix: Modern Clothes boutique, has created a luxe lounge-like spot perfect for gazing at a different kind of art.

With clothing collections by true auteurs like Balenciaga, Helmut Lang, Comme des Garçons and Mayle, you could spend hours dissecting each piece as you would a painting — and she even provides gallery seating to do it. Pen-and-ink drawings by Laura Lark add to the feel that something shockingly chic is happening here, along with expanded fashion offerings by Robyn & Brad, Fashion Active Lab (FAL), Scanlan & Theodore, United Bamboo and Souchi. Hip heels by Diana Broussard and accessories by Selima Optique find their way into light boxes, cut-out cement panels and catch-all cases. Gorman is ushering in an era of organic building materials for boutiques, subtly stating that the moment for the stained concrete floor is over. Stained pine plywood coats the façade, while the floors, sliding doors and furniture are Russian birch wood. Mohair drapes and Chilewich thatched rugs dress the nearly bedroom-sized dressing rooms. Having moved from 500 square feet in a townhouse to 2,800 in the latest locale, it's amazing that Gorman and daughter Liz still make you feel just as at home. *Mix: Modern Clothes, 2818 Kirby, 713.522.0606. Karen Sommer Shalett*



HESTER/ARADWAY PHOTOGRAPHERS

Mix boutique

Dean's spinning discs on Saturday; the place mixes a bit of acid jazz with trip hop, old soul and funk, reminding me of the cool lounges with a Hotel Costes feel popping up in Paris, London and Amsterdam. Ellis has hired consulting chef Gary Mercer (formerly of Ruggles and Jackson and Company) to work up a bar menu of pizzas, pomme frites and sauces (premiering in a few months) from a mock kitchen fashioned from a cool old Airstream trailer. Although I like the kitschy touches — like the gold-leafed room anchored by a three-foot disco mirrored ball and a cluster of crystal chandeliers hung in the room beside it — what endears me to the place are the cozy fleece blankets scattered about the patio and the flaming Mexican custom-built chimneys to warm you on a breezy night. *The Social, 3730 Washington Ave., 713.426.5585. Laurann Claridge*