

Istanbul Reimagined

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DESIGN, TRAVEL | BY SHONQUIS MORENO | SEPTEMBER 14, 2011 10:00 AM

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From left: Engin Gercek-Aras Kazmaoglu/Studio Majo; Ali Bekman; Cemal Emden. Turkish modern Clockwise from bottom left: Haaz, a shop showcasing products by home-grown designers; the geometric Yesil Vadi Mosque; the new Salt art and design center.

“Design is not about objects anymore; it’s more pervasive,” says Vasif Kortun, a director of Istanbul’s new arts center Salt (Istiklal Caddesi 136; saltonline.org).

“Turkey is picking it up belatedly.” And quickly. Since the opening of Adnan Kazmaoglu’s austere geometric Yesil Vadi Mosque in Istanbul last year, a design and architecture movement is sweeping through the city. Salt’s Beyoglu building, a columned space by the local architect Han Tumertekin on the boulevard Istiklal, features the work of a different Turkish designer in each room — there’s a cinema by Hakan Demirel, a bookstore by Omer Unal and a cafe by Ali Selcuk and the chef Murat Bozok. Regular symposiums cover everything from urban planning to electronic music, and later this fall a second outpost will open nearby in Galata.

There are plenty of fresh faces at the retail level, too: two local powerhouses, Autoban (autoban212.com) and Derin (derindesign.com), recently opened showrooms in Akaretler, and at Haaz (haaz.info), in Nisantasi, homegrown designs mingle with pieces by international names like Tom Dixon and Edra.

A taste for the contemporary has also seeped into the city’s hotels, most notably at the W (wistanbul.com.tr), which has furnishings by Derin, and in the House Hotel chainlet (thehousehotel.com), whose latest property on the Bosphorus mixes pre-Republic architecture with Autoban’s midcentury-esque furnishings. Perhaps the surest sign of Turkey’s creatively fertile times is the introduction of its first design biennial next year in Istanbul. “As a developing country, the need for design in every area is obvious,” says the director Ozlem Yalim Ozkaraoglu. “Good design upgrades the quality of life.”

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