

# THE DISH: TREND

BY DAWN TRIEMSTRA  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY GARY PAYNE



## MODERN MIGRATION *San Diego's suddenly chic district is turning into our very own SoHo*

When Jesper Pedersen, the Danish architect and owner of DNA Gallery, closed his MINI Cooper-sized shop on Solana Beach's Cedros Avenue in search of a bigger space, he knew exactly where to look. Downtown, where the Kettner Art and Design District has been calling out to San Diego's modern design set with its loft spaces—à la SoHo—and its cool mix of chic boutiques and old school Italian delis. The 4,000-square-foot DNA Gallery,

opened in April, is designed to serve the community where real estate is burgeoning and the modern aesthetic is fast taking hold. Says Pedersen, "There are 14,000 new condos being built downtown; it's booming like crazy. The spaces are smaller and ideal for the Scandinavian and Italian furniture we carry. It is more of that city life furniture."

Contemporary furniture boutiques have been popping up around Little Italy since David Skelley, the master of modern, opened Boomerang on India Street. But in the past year there has been a parade of design-conscious stores and galleries like Mixture, Zazou Home and Scott White Contemporary Art, putting Little Italy on the map for fashion forward interiors. "Now what we are starting to see, with the synergy of stores on Kettner, is people don't need to look elsewhere for great art and design," says Scott White, co-founder of Kettner Nights, the monthly open house that lures droves of design hungry San Diegans downtown for a peek at the latest in au courant design. "People like the cachet of going to New York to buy art," White says. "We'd like to see people in San Diego say they got their art, furniture and design inspiration here."

On any given day in Little Italy, businessmen are lunching at Filippi's Pizza Grotto—of red-and-white-table-cloth fame—while nearby at Vetro, interior designers are hand-picking rainbow-colored, vintage glassware. Down the alley, off a little side street, Che Bella florists are arranging hard-to-find Dogwood in a space so organic it appears to have sprung from the ground. The background noise: pure construction jackhammers. This kind of buzz adds to the neighborhood's mixed-use allure, especially for people like Boris Buecker, whose real estate company, Live In Architecture, specializes in architecturally significant property in Southern California. "With the influx of all the great lofts and condos being built around Little Italy, it is really turning into a metropolitan city, like Vancouver, more European."

Inside Pedersen's DNA Gallery, high-end contemporary designs from Fritz Hansen, whose uber-chic chairs are in the newly remodeled MOMA, sit alongside the Italian line Moroso, which supplies seats to jet setters at the Hong Kong Airport. "Every year things are getting more and more contemporary all over the U.S.," says Pedersen. "This city is so new and we are trying to get that SoHo feeling." SoHo, yes, but happily a much sunnier version. **R**

**THE SIGN SAYS:** Downtown's Little Italy is picking up speed with contemporary design. **MAN WITH A PLAN:** Jesper Pedersen of DNA Gallery