



HOLIDAY style

MONTREAL December 2015

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Griffintown: A hotbed of hip

Contemporary decor offerings
abound in latest 'It' neighbourhood

By Rochelle Lash

Griffintown, born in the 1800s as a working-class and industrial sector of Montreal, has become the darling of stylish urbanites revelling in an edgy new café-and-condo culture.

Its new residents are thrilled about living in an "It neighbourhood" within

a few blocks of downtown. They can cycle to work, stroll out for a micro-brew and steak-frites, and step into a boucherie selling wagyu beef at \$120 a kilogram.

But where exactly is Griffintown?

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4



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Cupcake emporium Itsi Bitsi sells knick-knacks, including cards and Pantone-coloured mugs.



For decor-obsessed shoppers, Beige is a must-visit on Notre-Dame St. W. in Griffintown. Items include these silver-plated candlesticks.

Griffintown transformed

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Formally, it spreads north of the Lachine Canal to Notre-Dame St., and east from Georges-Vanier to the Bonaventure Expressway, a total of barely one square kilometre.

Yet the borders are blurred, and Griffintown is as much a state of mind as a place.

It is sharply more upscale, more high-tech and more youth-oriented than the other districts of Sud-Ouest borough — Petite-Bourgogne, Pointe-St-Charles, St-Henri and St-Paul-Émard — and Griffintown is the hottest of them all.

During the past decade, more than 14 major housing complexes in Griffintown opened and are now home to nearly 6,000 people. Sylvain Villeneuve, director of urban planning for Sud-Ouest, reports as many as 15,000 more will move into new or transformed dwellings over the next 10 years.

All this square footage simply must be decorated and the more fashionably, the better. At one time, the workaday Salvation Army and Rona Hardware on Notre-Dame St. were enough for a shabby-chic coat of paint and a pre-loved futon. Not anymore.

We offer a peek at several irresistible design and decor shops, which are the source of everything cool and contemporary.

FAMILIAR FOOTPRINT

For decades, Notre-Dame St. near Atwater Ave., adjacent to Griffintown, was a treasure chest of ornate antiques that would make your grandmother swoon. That was yesteryear. The decor shops of today are fresh and progressive.

Michael Stratulak of Beige has curated a collection with a vintage patina and the warm glow of hearth and home. Soothing colours and rich textures — velvet, mohair, wool and linen for rugs, sofas and throws — are the trademarks here.

“Neutral shades are timeless,” said Stratulak. “And ‘Beige’ is a classic that works in both French and English.”

Tableware in a toile de Jouy pattern, organic cotton sheets and fragrant soaps from Marseille are among the shop’s irresistible goods.

Almost across the street, SDA Home is a new branch of a French company specializing in ravishing objets carved from reclaimed wood.

These products are rustic but refined, importing a touch of the countryside with tables of lacquered tree stumps, cowhide wall coverings and wide-

planked oak floors.

A step away, Itsi Bitsi is a cupcake shop and catering establishment with sweet giftware, including an array of Pantone-coloured coffee mugs and fancy dessert plates.

THE NEW WAVE

Heading about two kilometres east to Peel and Wellington streets, we enter a zone that is transforming at a dramatic pace.

This is a few blocks from the Bonaventure Expressway, the entrance to Montreal that is being rebuilt into a landscaped boulevard.

Two institutions are rocking the scene, as well — the futuristic École de technologie supérieure (ETS), an engineering arm of the Université du Québec, and the Alt Hotel.

Nearby, the decor shop West Elm is an emporium of modern must-haves — zebra-print bowls for lattes, mirrors all over the walls and embroidered pillows to match every mood.

Although West Elm is a chain affiliated with both Williams-Sonoma and Pottery Barn, with online sales and nearly 90 shops in countries around the world, every location showcases crafts by regional artisans. In Montreal, these include Alice in Montréal, Avenue Coloniale, Atelier 1064 INC, Créations Ropes & Woods, Paperole, Petits Mots and Tona Objects.

Nearby, Ludovik sells eclectic, affordable accessories, including fun baubles by celebrity designer Jonathan Adler.

Now, imagine the top echelon of upscale. If you have splurged on a Griffintown penthouse, you’ll need prestigious suppliers. In January, the design company Pure will open its spectacular Griffintown showroom of kitchen and home interiors by Italian manufacturers.

And two shimmering, interconnected shops, Mitchell Gold + Bob Williams and Celadon Collection, attract both professional designers and consumers. Open for the past 11 years, Celadon was the first decor retailer in Griffintown.

Here you’ll find exclusive contemporary collections of dazzling lighting, fancy accessories and luxurious furniture by internationally known designers, such as Kelly Wearstler, Barbara Barry, Aerin Lauder, Julian Chichester and Mr. Brown London.



PHOTOS BY GRAHAM HUGHES/STYLE MONTREAL

Founded in 2007 by Michael Stratulak, Beige, a decor concept store, is inspired by the shops of Paris, London and New York.



Hand-blown glass vases poured onto hollowed-out wooden trunks are available at SDA Home in Griffintown.

Where to go:

Beige: 2480 Notre Dame St. W., beigestyle.com, 514-989-8585.

Celadon Collection: 170 Peel St., celadoncollection.com, 514-932-3306.

Itsi Bitsi: 2507 Notre-Dame St. W., itsi-bitsi.com, 514-509-3926.

Ludovik: 1318 Notre-Dame St. W., ludovik.ca, 514-678-6617.

Mitchell Gold + Bob Williams: 1057 Wellington St., mgbwmontreal.com, 514-788-8801.

Pure: 1845 William St., purecuisines.com, 514-543-8213.

SDA Home: 2613 Notre-Dame St. W., sda-decoracion.com, 514-800-6885.

West Elm: 995 Wellington St., westelm.com, 514-861-2809.



Beige sells an array of irresistible goods, like these fluffy Portofino towels.



Celadon, the first decor store in Griffintown, continues to shine brightly with a mix of chic lighting options.



It’s easy to fall in love with this decorative pillow by Denis Meunier at Ludovik.



Sweet treats abound at Itsi Bitsi, the city’s first cupcake emporium.



A luxurious bedroom display at Mitchell Gold + Bob Williams is just one of the many pretty settings worth checking out.



Jonathan Adler ceramics and artwork by Eve, right, can be found at Ludovik.



The hip, light-filled Alt Hotel is strategically located at the gates of the city and within walking distance of the Old Port, Montreal’s commercial district and the Lachine Canal.