



Chefs, fashion designers, and furniture makers are turning Music City into a fertile breeding ground for the creative class.

BY LOGAN LEASURE

If cowboy boots and country music are still the first things that come to mind when you think of Nashville, then it's time to get reacquainted with the kinetic exemplar of the New South. Long known as a bastion of Dixie culture, the city has shed its provincial stigma over the last decade and in the process emerged as one of the country's most captivating urban centers.

I first moved to Nashville in 2011, as a college student pursuing—what else?—a career in the music industry. A product of suburban Pennsylvania, I had always painted the South with a broad brush, a mindset that would undergo a drastic reorientation soon after arriving to Tennessee's capital. Seven years ago, the city was on the cusp of becoming what it now is—a vibrant cultural hub. The stunning transformation has surprised those who have traditionally known Music City as a one-note town. Today, it is a melting pot of industries and transplants, many of whom, like me, never

saw themselves living here, but were seduced by its promise of possibility.

In every corner of the city, signs of a newfound dynamism are burgeoning. East Nashville, a part of town that, in eras past, was verging on complete desolation, has come roaring back to life, thanks to trailblazers like the culinary duo Corey Ladd and Matt Spicher, who turned a craftsman-style home into the celebrated Treehouse restaurant, a staunch advocate of locavorism that sources its food from homegrown vendors and from its own organic heirloom farm nearby. It was a first for the area jeeringly known as “across the bridge,” and its success led to a wildly popular sophomore effort, bar No. 308, and now Pearl Diver, an in-the-works tropical food concept slated to open later this year. The epicurean revival story is an inclusive one. Midtown's self-described culinary incubator Catbird Seat, currently led by chef Ryan Poli, was the first to introduce the limited-seat, highly progressive tasting menu experience into the city's lexicon. In Germantown, a former stronghold of European immigrants just north of downtown, 19th-century Victorian mansions and former artists' studios have been repurposed as coffeehouses and James Beard-nominated restaurants. It was here that a new age of experimentation in the kitchen commenced, when Tandy Wilson unified

Italian cuisine with the South's farm-to-table ethos at City House in 2007. Since then, a host of new entrants have continued to up the ante, serving lamb sausage with yogurt and fennel at Rolf and Daughters or miso BBQ at Butchertown Hall. Now at its third location, Barista Parlor is the embodiment of the collaborative spirit percolating here, offering up small-batch roasters from around the country in spaces that could double as showrooms for independent artists, local furniture makers, and rising fashion designers.

Food can take credit for the renewed national interest in the spiritual home of Johnny Cash and hot chicken, but an influx of young creatives and entrepreneurs are leading phase two of Nashville's coming of age. Across town, the early-century bungalows of the 12 South district are ground zero for its contemporary fashion movement. Matt and Carrie Eddmenson, who turned a ramshackle auto garage into the heritage-denim sensation Imogene + Willie, were the first to plant their flag, in 2009. Celebrity stylist Claudia Fowler, who has dressed country music's biggest superstars (Miranda Lambert, Faith Hill), set up shop in 2014 with the opening of her boutique, Hero. Reese Witherspoon followed suit soon after; the first brick-and-mortar location of her brand Draper James arrived in late 2015.

PHOTO: COURTESY URBAN COWBOY.

Meanwhile, the overlords of startup culture have discovered ripe conditions for innovation. The Google-backed Nashville Entrepreneur Center has spawned over 5,000 startup concepts since its inception, in 2010. Lyft now maintains one of its largest offices mere steps away from downtown's Broadway. Nisolo, whose shoes have set a new standard with their sharp emphasis on ethically made products, is flourishing. So too is Elizabeth Suzann, a line of women's essentials born four years ago out of designer Elizabeth Pape's spare bedroom, and whose extensive focus on textile sustainability has earned her fans beyond the state's borders.

Out-of-town studios, from Design, Bitches (Little Octopus) to Parts and Labor (Thompson Nashville), in concert with local studios like Steric Designs and Southern Lights Electric (both brought their quintessential Southern flair to the new Noelle hotel), are making their mark with a singular style best described as modern rusticism. A progressive mayor is pushing vital projects forward, including a \$5 billion transit plan that includes an extensive light-rail network. The city's airport is set for a dramatic design overhaul and expansion led by Dallas-based firm Corgan, to be completed by 2023. British Airways is preparing to launch direct flights from Heathrow, bringing transatlantic air service to the city for the first time since the early 1990s. And, in maybe the clearest indication yet that Nashville has joined the ranks of the top-tier culture capitals, its first-ever international art fair, Art Nashville, will take place this fall, spearheaded by the cofounder of Miami's X Contemporary and the New York-based Select. It will showcase a substantial regional presence, with an infusion of an element surely no art fair before it can lay claim to: country music. >

PHOTO: COURTESY THE FRIST CENTER FOR THE VISUAL ARTS. COURTESY URBAN COWBOY.

(FROM TOP) The Frist Center for the Visual Arts. A vintage clawfoot tub at Urban Cowboy. (OPPOSITE) The hotel's music parlor.





HOTELS

Boutique hoteliers have flooded Nashville in recent years, bringing a sorely lacking vibrancy to what was a staid landscape of business-focused properties and low-grade chains. In 2016, **Thompson** opened a 224-room glass-and-steel tower in the Gulch, a youthful neighborhood just off downtown once known chiefly as a railway hub. New York firm Parts and Labor tapped local purveyors like Jack White's Third Man Records, who provided the lobby's vinyl collection, and small-batch cocktail startup With Co. for the bottled drinks in the minibars. Others quickly followed suit, each with their own distinctiveness. An outpost of art collectors Laura Lee Brown and Steve Wilson's **21c Museum Hotels** took root inside the 117-year-old Gray & Dudley building downtown. As usual, Deborah Berke Partners dreamed up the visual identity, with 124 copper-and-zinc-accented guest rooms, including a few with private terraces looking out at the Cumberland River and three custom-designed artist

suites; a 24-hour exhibition space that hosts rotating shows by curator Alice Gray Stites and pieces from the brand's collection; and chef Levon Wallace's comfort-food renditions at the restaurant, adorned by artist Beth Cavener Stichter's ceramic animal sculptures. On the heels of stylish debuts in Amsterdam and Los Angeles, the 180-room **Aertson Hotel** is yet another sign of Kimpton Hotels' ongoing design awakening. The modern aesthetic by San Francisco architectural firm Gensler is elevated by curator Cynthia Reeves's art selections, including a kinetic thread installation by Anne Lindberg, featured prominently in the public spaces.

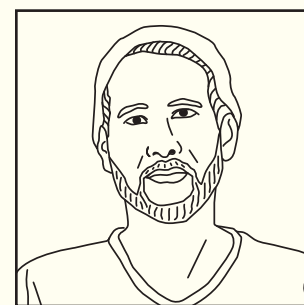
On a downtown street known as Printers Alley, the 244-room **Noelle** comes courtesy of a trio of local firms: Feltus Hawkins Design, Dryden Architecture and Design, and Peck & Company. Inside, light-pink granite walls, art deco-inspired inlaid wood ceilings, and restored terrazzo floors

hark back to the area's heyday, which is also celebrated at artist Bryce McCloud's art space and boutique, where a working vintage printing press is put to use. See firsthand what the hype over coffee roaster Andy Mumma is about at the café and stop by the retail store for one-off design objects and a selection by local fashion designers. Be on the lookout for **Fairlane Hotel**, several blocks away, set to open early this year. Housed in a Midcentury former bank, New York's Reunion Goods & Services is overhauling the interiors with an eye toward 1970s design.

Before the torrent of lifestyle hotels flooded the scene, two super-intimate and individualistic arrivals proved that Nashville was hungry for some variety. Opened in 2014, the **404 Hotel** offers just five rooms, set in a converted auto garage. Architect Nick Dryden's site-specific furniture with lighting by Artemide and Pablo contributes to the pared-down look; book the lofted king

PHOTO: COURTESY 21C NASHVILLE

suite, outfitted with a spiral staircase and original works by Nashville photographer Caroline Allison. Despite the hotel's small size, a dedicated concierge is at the ready, along with room service from the James Beard Award-winning 404 Kitchen. Following the success of its original location in Brooklyn, **Urban Cowboy** is emblematic of East Nashville's rise. The brainchild of former pro hockey player Lyon Porter and partner Jersey Banks, the eight-room bed and breakfast inside a Victorian mansion is meticulously appointed with vintage chesterfield sofas, turn-of-the-century clawfoot tubs, Printsburgh's eccentrically patterned wallpaper, and an assortment of musical instruments, as well as wooden wall fixtures from Nashville's own 1767 Designs. >



PATRICK HAYES
1767 DESIGNS

"The day for me often starts at **Dose Café & Dram Bar**. It's one of the best coffee spots in town—it has a clean, minimal interior design and is always full of locals. The art deco vibe at Thompson Hotel's **Marsh House** restaurant is an absolute must (same with the food). Nashville's bartenders are super creative, way beyond what most people would expect, which is why I've been spending a lot of evenings at **Old Glory** and the **Fox Bar & Cocktail Club**. These places are more than just trends, they are becoming mainstays."

(FROM TOP) Thompson's Marsh House restaurant. The Aertson's lobby. A whitewashed guest room at Noelle. (OPPOSITE) Sebastiaan Bremer's "Sanctuary," an artist-designed suite at 21c Nashville.

PHOTOS: COURTESY THOMPSON NASHVILLE. COURTESY LAURE JOLIET. COURTESY EMILY DORIO.





RESTAURANTS & BARS

It wasn't so long ago that the most exciting places to eat in Nashville were hot-chicken joints, traditional BBQ shacks, or honky-tonks, where the amateur house bands and aspiring country stars are more memorable than the food itself. Those days are nearly forgotten now. From experimental Asian cuisine to new takes on Southern staples, a globalized and risk-taking food culture has established itself. Quickly becoming a favorite is chef Maneet Chauhan's **Tansu**, a soaring dining room where the lantern-inspired pendants, abacus-like railings, and turquoise banquettes—the work of Nashville-based designer London Parfitt—complement lamb dumplings and sesame golden eggs from an impressive dim sum menu. In the backyard of Urban Cowboy, an assemblage of culinary talent from highly touted kitchens such as Rolf and Daughters and Catbird Seat head up **Public House**, an unconventional grill and cocktail bar with no servers. Order one of the seasonal wood-fired plates at the bar and grab any table that is open, or find an available chair around the campfire outside beneath a massive Watusi bull skull.

Bring a group to **Little Octopus** for Latin-tinged shared plates like shrimp ceviche with plantains and sweet-potato tamales. Los Angeles firm Design, Bitches, pays homage to Miami's golden age with an airy pastel palette, cane-backed chairs, and artist Chris Zidek's large-scale octopus mural. Blue Hill at Stone Barns alum Julia Sullivan serves up low-country-inspired dishes



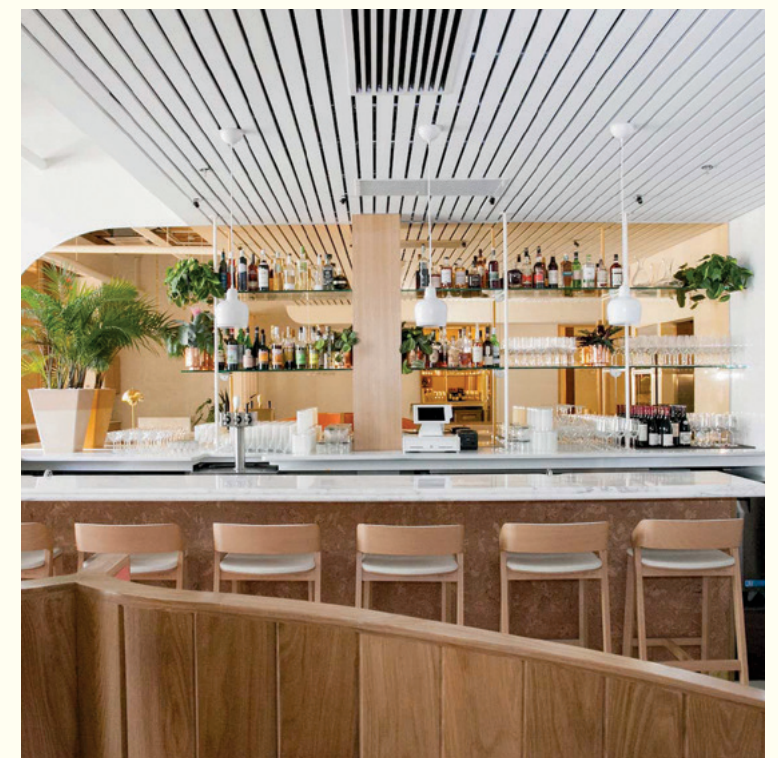
(FROM TOP) Nook-like banquettes line Tansu. The bar counter at Henrietta Red. (OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP) Old Glory's exposed elements. Little Octopus. A cocktail at Fox Bar and Cocktail Club.

PHOTOS: COURTESY TANSU, COURTESY HENRIETTA RED.



PHOTOS: COURTESY OLD GLORY, COURTESY LITTLE OCTOPUS, COURTESY ANGELINA MELODY PHOTOGRAPHY.

at Germantown's **Henrietta Red**, a whitewashed, farmhouse-style restaurant by Kathryn Lager Design Studio with navy banquettes and geometric tiled flooring. The whimsical cocktails from barman Patrick Halloran, who made a name for himself at Patterson House, are on offer at the elegant marble counter, where spirits are displayed on minimal industrial shelving by local makers Ferrin Ironworks. His ingenuity behind the bar is matched by counterparts such as **Old Glory**, hidden in the depths of a 1920s-era boiler room in Edgehill, and East Nashville's **Fox Bar & Cocktail Club**, a retro drinking den outfitted with inlaid wood and concrete by 1767 Designs and led by bartender Will Benedetto, who comes by way of New York (Blind Barber, Drexler's). The perfect hangover cure: the earthy avocado toast at prolific restaurateur Miranda Pontes's **Lulu**, a century-old former blacksmith workshop in Germantown done up in white brick and furniture by Danish furniture and lighting brand Gubi. >





ALICE GREY STITES
CURATOR, 21C
MUSEUM HOTELS

"After settling into one of the three artist-designed suites at 21c (Sebastian Bremer's "Sanctuary," with its fully loaded recording studio, is my first pick), I head out to see what the **Frist Museum** is showing. Their recent Nick Cave exhibition, 'Feat,' was outstanding, and the art deco building is stunning. Artists have been flocking to Nashville from the coasts, and the gallery scene is expanding. My favorites are **Zeigeist**, **Tinney Contemporary**, and **David Lusk**. Before heading back to 21c, I stop by the amazing **Third Man Records** to pick up a new album, grab a book or two at **Parnassus Books**, and admire the dazzling and often bedazzled clothing at **Manuel Couture**."



PHOTOS: COURTESY PRICE HARRISON, COURTESY IMOGEN + WILLIE.



SHOPPING

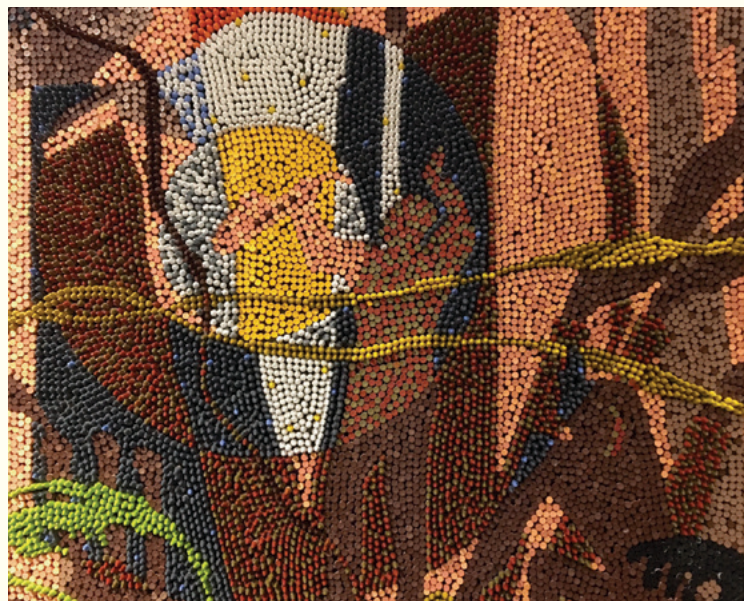
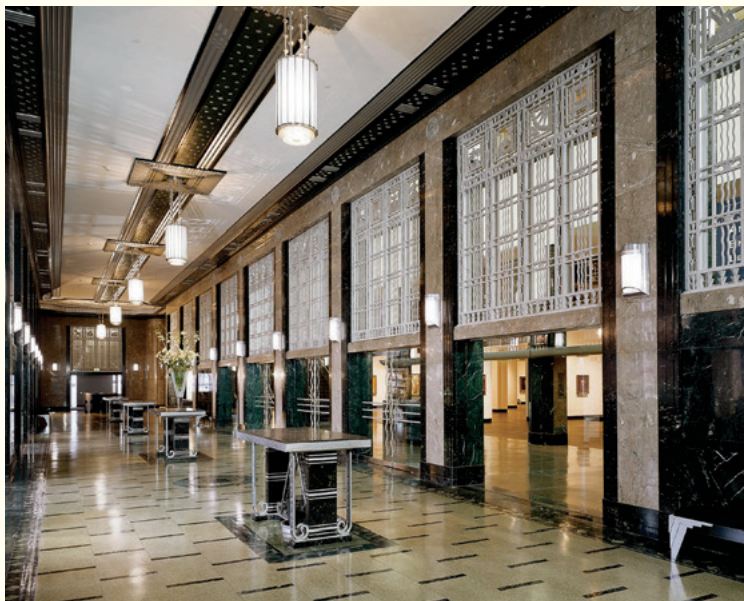
There's no better example of Nashville's fashion ascendance than **Two Sons**, a lifestyle boutique in East Nashville that stocks such leading-edge brands as Ryan Roche and B Sides. While hard-to-find international names are a big draw, the team of two couples—a product designer and indie-folk musician, and writer-photographer duo of the fashion blog Bluebird—is an enthusiastic proponent of the American-made. Case in point: their self-styled label produced in an on-site studio with materials sourced in the U.S. Some would argue it was Kentucky natives and denim-wear pioneers Matt and Carrie Eddmenson who set off the style renaissance with the launch of **Imogene + Willie** in 2009. Occupying a repurposed auto garage in 12 South, it has gained widespread recognition as the standard for heritage, hand-cut selvedge jeans. A graduate of London's Central Saint Martins, Savannah Yarborough struck out on her own in 2015 after heading up the menswear division at Billy Reid, gaining cult status for her made-to-order leather jackets. Pick one up at the designer's **Atelier Savas**, a Cannery Row couture temple to Italian

PHOTO: COURTESY CAROLINE SHARPNACK.

calfskin and lush fabrics like velvet and tiger silk. Another East Nashville outfit making waves is the newly opened streetwear retailer **Rooted**, whose minimalist open-floor showroom by architect Price Harrison serves as a canvas for an array of high-end brands, from Comme des Garçons to Stone Island to Adidas by Raf Simons. In Germantown, husband-and-wife performance artists Josh and Ivy Elrod opened the design shop **Wilder** after two decades of living in New York. (They recently launched a satellite, **Wilder Etudes**, steps from Music Row.) There's a bit of everything here, including Garza Marfa round chairs, Hasami porcelain mugs, and rose gold Shinola turntables. On East Nashville's lively Eastland Avenue, **Lemon Laine** capitalizes on the current essential-oil craze with a candy-toned emporium designed by New Hat Projects, a local interiors studio gaining notoriety for its use of bold graphics and vibrant colors. For custom plant-based products blended on-site, book an appointment at the in-house Oil Bar. The true hometown boutique, though, is **White's Mercantile**, a self-described

general store housed in a former gas station that has seen locals and tourists flocking to its 12 South location since its 2013 inception. The concept was launched by singer-songwriter Holly Williams (yes, that Williams family) in what has become a true Southern bazaar. Charcoal goat's-milk soap? Check. Smoked-honey whiskey sours for the perfect cocktail mix? Check. Gwyneth Paltrow's stamp of approval? Check. Don't miss the musician's latest venture, **White's Room & Board**, a collection of rentable cottages renovated and designed by Williams in unequivocally southern settings (a farm, a country village) just outside Nashville. >

The colorful hues of Lemon Laine. (OPPOSITE, FROM TOP) Rooted's moody exterior. A vintage vibe flows through Imogene + Willie.



CULTURE

This April, Nashville Fashion Week will kickoff its eighth year at the multipurpose contemporary arts space **OZ Arts Nashville**, which hosts a range of exhibitions and theatrical performances, including an upcoming one in a renovated cigar warehouse. The yearly runway exposition regularly brings in global designers, including the likes of Milan's Marco Baldassari, London's Francesca Marotta, and New York's Daniella Kallmeyer. The **Frist Center for the Visual Arts**, whose home is a 1930s-era marble art deco building that once served as the region's main postal office, has acted as the city's cultural epicenter since it opened in 2001. It continues to court major international talent: Look out for shows by Iranian-born artist Afruz Amighi and Korean sculptor Do Huh Suh in 2018.

The gallery scene is more visible than ever, largely thanks to the popular monthly First Saturday Art Crawl, centered mainly in the Wedgewood-Houston neighborhood (quickly becoming an art hot spot with a slew of abandoned industrial buildings being given new life as creative spaces) in South Nashville, and on downtown's 5th Avenue of the Arts. **Zeitgeist Gallery**, an anchor of art experimentation in Nashville since the early 1990s, isn't shy about bringing in heavy hitters. Project Runway star (and Nashville local) Amanda Valentine was front and center at 2017's Wearable Surfaces fashion exhibition, while current showcase States of Matter features an all-female ensemble of sculptors. Nearby **David Lusk Gallery**, based in Memphis but finding itself comfortably at home in Tennessee, featured a late-2017 exhibition from Berlin-native Anne Siems in a series of striking and intimate abstract paintings of women and children ("Two Corals" is a masterpiece). Thenjiwe Niki Nkosi,

(FROM TOP) The gallery at 21c Nashville. Frist Center for the Visual Arts. A work by artist Aaron Douglas at Rymer Gallery. (OPPOSITE, FROM TOP) Tinney Contemporary. Outside Zeitgeist Gallery.

PHOTOS: COURTESY 21C NASHVILLE. COURTESY FRIST CENTER FOR THE VISUAL ARTS. COURTESY RYMER GALLERY.

the Johannesburg-based artist who has exhibits at the Tate Modern and Fondation Louis Vuitton in her growing portfolio, explores the lives of the exiled (including her own father) in "The Beginning of Stories," on view through Jan. 20 at **Seed Space**, founded in 2010 by Tennessee-based artist Adrienne Outlaw.

To see a permanent collection that includes works by Warhol, Hockney, and Rauschenberg without the crowds, head to **Cheekwood** on the city's outskirts. The sprawling 55-acre museum and botanical garden is situated on an early 20th-century estate by architect Bryant Fleming and also features temporary exhibitions, including two large-scale summer showcases from Australian artist Amanda Parer and Italian collective Cracking Art, whose colorful life-size penguins serve as the mascots of 21c Museum Hotels.



LYON PORTER AND JERSEY BANKS
CO-OWNERS OF URBAN COWBOY

PHOTOS: COURTESY TINNEY CONTEMPORARY. COURTESY CHRIS SCARBOROUGH.

"Most of our favorite spots have more of a dive-y, hometown feel. **Caribbean Splash** is an amazing car wash and jerk-chicken joint in the north part of the city. We go to **Dino's** over on our side of town (East Nashville) all the time for late-night burgers and beer and we almost never miss tamale day on Wednesdays at **Mas Tacos Por Favor**. Tourists and locals alike are obsessed with the **Ryman Auditorium**, otherwise known as the Mother Church of Country Music. If you can, go to the Grand Ole Opry at the Ryman—it's magical."

