

HOME DESIGN

# The SoWa Boston Design Hub Blossoms



Molteni&amp;C's Boston location opens in SoWa.

- The neighborhood, once plagued by crime and the opioid crisis, is seeing a resurgence with new European luxury brands moving in and more.

BY SOFIA CELESTE

**A 10-minute walk** from the heart of Boston's opioid crisis and a skip and jump from Pine Street Inn homeless shelter, SoWa design district is the new hub of the city's design community. In the last year alone, it has become a hot spot that attracted the crème de la crème of European luxury design names like Meridiani and Paola Lenti for the first time and saw Molteni&C open a newly expanded flagship space.

But when artist Adrienne Christos set up her studio here in 2012, walking to work from her nearby loft made her heart beat – and not in a good way, she explains.

"The South End has always had a gritty fringe and when you talk about SoWa specifically, that's the fringe. It's still rough, with shelters and the infamous Methadone Mile, but it is also mushrooming with new multimillion-dollar condos, top restaurants and a 50,000-square-foot Whole Foods," she says after a long day of work, with drops of paint still splattering her fingers and jeans.

For much of the latter part of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st, Bostonians born and bred knew treading the border of the Dorchester area and South End area south of Washington at Harrison Avenue was a risk, even though the nearby trendy gay bar and restaurant scene just blocks away was too hard to resist.

Until last year the tent city known as Methadone Mile, an open-air drug



Adrienne Christos

market, was still intact but has since been dismantled due to an uptick in sex trafficking and violence. SoWa's (an abbreviation for South of Washington) direct neighbor, homeless shelter and housing hub Pine Street Inn on 444 Harrison Avenue, remains a bittersweet city landmark. Its tower was designed after Siena, Italy's Torre del Mangia by iconic New England architect Edmund M. Wheelwright in 1893. The building was in its early years the city's fire department headquarters, built after a sweeping blaze grounded much of the area. In 1969 it began housing homeless men suffering from alcoholism and today it provides permanent residences for those experiencing homelessness and continues to operate as an emergency shelter.



SoWa Art and Design District.

About 20 years ago, SoWa Boston's founder, Mario Nicosia, saw the area's affordable old buildings as an opportunity and decided to transform them into a cultural hub. On Sundays the pedestrian-only Thayer Street turns into a festive open market with music, veggie burgers and local artisan craft.

The neighborhood is also home to Casa Design Group, which was started by Zhanna Drogobetsky in 2008 as a small boutique-style design showroom dedicated to the importation of international furnishings. The group has since grown into a multi-showroom of curated interior and exterior products for both residential and commercial spaces and carries most of the top Italian design brands such as Molteni&C, Porada, Kettal, Roda,

Meridiani, Living Divani, Rimadesio, Gallotti&Radice, Henge and many more across four showrooms: Casa Design Living, Casa Design Outdoor, the Molteni&C flagship, and Giorgetti. Drogobetsky has played a huge role in amping up the neighborhood's value. This fall Casa Design Group launched a shop-in-shop for Gallotti&Radice. Meridiani is currently being showcased in a small boutique space within the Casa Design space but will soon have its own dedicated flagship.

"We were among the first to open a high-end showroom in SoWa. We were confident it was the right place for us with so many design and architectural studios nearby. We're proud to have paved the way for others... to grow in this vibrant area," Drogobetsky explains. ▶

# WWD

Fashion. Beauty. Business.



### Inside Out

The North Face and Skims have teamed on an outerwear collection using Skims technology and color palette. **Page 3**



### Pre-Fall Rolls On

Balmain and Carolina Herrera join the slew of brands unveiling their latest pre-fall collections. **Pages 10 and 11**



### Books and More

Assouline has opened a flagship in Riyadh, complete with a restaurant and piano bar. **Page 21**



## Night and Day

That has been Ralph Lauren this week in Shanghai, as it took over the city 24/7 to publicize the screening of the documentary "Very Ralph," implementing everything from a 15-minute drone show that lit up the night sky over the Bund – including an image of the iconic designer in a cowboy hat – to numerous posters around town featuring his image, such as on the façade of the Shanghai Concert Hall, seen here. *For more on the activations, see pages 8 and 9.*

EXTERIOR PHOTOGRAPH BY RIVEN ZHANG

### BUSINESS

# Moncler's Remo Ruffini On Big Plans

● In a wide-ranging interview, Remo Ruffini talked about Moncler's latest store on New Bond Street, his relationship with Bernard Arnault, and why he'll never settle for "ordinary."

BY SAMANTHA CONTI

London called Remo Ruffini and the Moncler boss responded with gusto, opening a big store on New Bond Street, and accepting the Trailblazer prize at the Fashion Awards on Monday night, where he hobnobbed with old friends and colleagues, including Tom Ford, Michèle Lamy and Joshua Schulman, Burberry's new chief executive officer.

Ruffini capped the frenetic week – which included multiple meetings with investors – by cohosting a celebratory dinner with his friend and collaborator Jony Ive. To mark the store opening, Ive created a special, dark blue version of the jacket with magnetic fastenings that he designed with Moncler earlier this year.

The dinner took place on Thursday night at the Chelsea home of Ruth Rogers, chef patron of The River Café, whose pizzetta with taleggio makes Ruffini swoon.

Ruffini is man on the move, and doesn't like losing momentum. "Energy" is one of his favorite words, and he believes it's the key to success. Energy is also the reason that Ruffini wanted to open the New Bond Street store, which is just a few minutes' walk from Moncler's Old Bond Street unit.

Ruffini is concerned about the buzz on Old Bond Street – the end nearest to Piccadilly. He said that part of the street is increasingly dominated by high jewelry brands, and it's impacting footfall. He also noted – rightly – that there are only a few big fashion brands left on that end of the street, namely Prada and Saint Laurent.

"It's charming – but subdued – and I thought we needed more energy, and better footfall," said Ruffini over a glass of wine and a vape in the courtyard restaurant at Chiltern Firehouse.

The move was a big one, even if it is just a few minutes' walk from Moncler's Old Bond Street store, which will close late next year.

At 43-44 New Bond Street, Moncler's new town house (formerly occupied by the German jeweler Wempe) is located on one of the world's hottest retail strips.

According to Cushman & Wakefield's latest Main Streets report, New Bond is the

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