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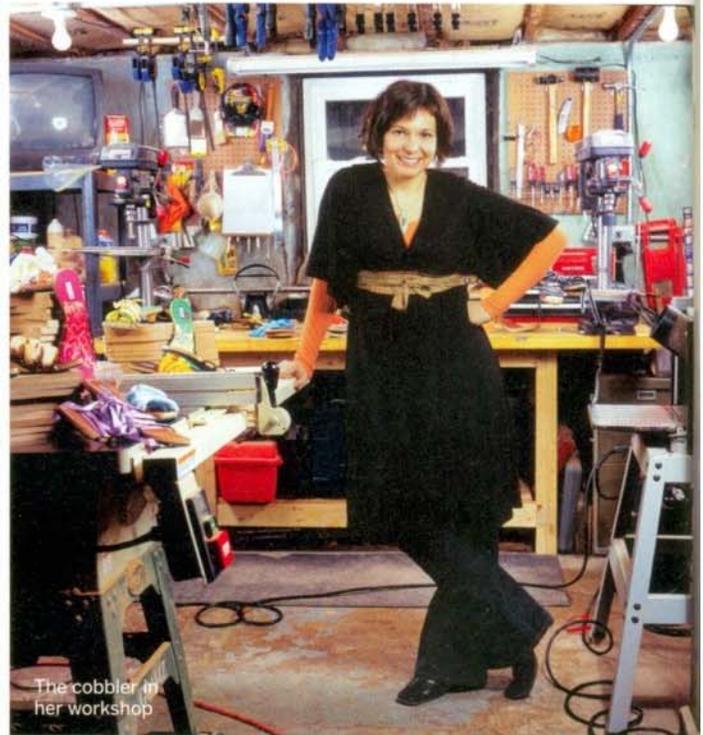
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Chicago

*Our unabashedly subjective
guide to the designers,
stores, and goods that make
the city shine*

Is it our imagination, or does the city seem more polished these days? Perhaps it's because designers seem to be everywhere—not only prowling the streets in the city's hipper quadrants, but populating stores with their unique goods, from cutting-edge clothing to furniture. We profile five independent designers we think you should know about (page 62) and highlight some of our favorite new Chicago creations, from Bridgette Buckley's elegantly modern Crab Table to Cass Gunschel's decorative wallpaper. But nothing measures the city's style quotient better than the quality of its boutiques as their inventories display the taste of the people who pick the world's finest goods within arm's reach. In our search for Chicago's very best (page 66), we excluded stores—such as Active Endeavors and Paper Source—that, though we love them, have grown to a size that puts them in a bigger league. Even so, we whittled down our list to a spectacular range of independently owned specialty stores, bolstered by the retail explosion that's still happening on Damen Avenue in Bucktown (see our timeline of how the neighborhood has transformed over the past three decades, page 74). If there's a more enjoyable way to shop, please let us know



The cobbler in her workshop



Annie Mohaupt

MOHOP SHOES

When Annie Mohaupt made herself a skateboard a few years ago, it was purely for amusement. "I was this dorky architect, dressed in a black turtleneck, riding a skateboard to work," she recalls. But when the architecture career lost its luster for Mohaupt, 31, she turned her former mode of transportation into the soul—and sole—of a budding shoe business.

After a friend invited her to participate in the Renegade Craft Fair in the fall of 2005, Mohaupt had a vision of "a shoe that looked like a skateboard," and "all summer, I was like a mad scientist, making prototypes out of plywood," she recalls. Adding various heel heights was a no-brainer; the problem was the tops. (Shoemakers normally build shoes on molds, or "lasts," in every size, but such an investment was out of the question for Mohaupt.) One glorious May day, Mohaupt hit upon her unique make-your-own-sundae version of shoe-shopping—letting her customers create their own strappy sandals by weaving ribbons of their choice through elastic loops attached below the top layer of plywood—and from there, Mohop was born. Taking another cue from the skateboard culture, Mohaupt screen-prints her own graphic designs on the soles.

After her success at Renegade, Mohaupt started selling at shows and online. Last year, she was named one of Gen Art's Fresh Faces in Fashion, and her line, under the name Mohop, is carried at Wolfbait & B-girls in Logan Square. These days, the humble Mohaupt, who makes

an average of eight pairs of shoes a day out of her basement studio, is on to the next challenge: closed toes. This is Chicago, after all.

mohop.com

