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DAY OUT | LISBON

On the Waterfront, With Style

By SETH SHERWOOD

OVERSHADOWED by larger, wealthier and more flashy European countries with world-renowned design specialties — Italian lighting, Scandinavian furniture, French fashion — [Portugal](#) has long hid on the Continent's margin both geographically and creatively. For years, the best-known cultural contributions from this small seafaring nation were those stewed up in cauldrons from humble materials like squid and cod.

But that is changing, and no place embodies Portugal's emergence as a serious design destination better than the waterside Santos quarter of [Lisbon](#). The splashiest evidence is the Boavista site, where Norman Foster is designing a futuristic tower and commercial complex that will be filled with “galleries, studios, showrooms, exhibitions, performances, cinema, auditorium, cafes, shops, bars and restaurants,” in the words of its press materials. The goal is to create a project that “promotes the worlds of design and the arts.”

In the meantime, devotees of sleekness can genuflect before [Santos da Casa](#) (Avenida Dom Carlos I 49a, 351-21-395-2536), a loftlike emporium that showcases upstart Portuguese designers alongside Continental design icons like Poltrona chairs and Arne Jacobsen tea services. Especially impressive are Ana Pimentel's sinuous J-shaped lamp in blond wood (163 euros, or about \$243 at \$1.49 to the euro) and Luísa Peixoto's boxy chrome lamps adorned with red silk (180 euros).

Aluminum, plastic, cork, rubber and wood aren't exactly the most dazzling ingredients in the jewelry trade — and that's just the point for Paula Crespo, the proprietor of [Galeria Reverso](#) (Rua da Esperança 59-61, 351-21-395-1407; www.reversodasbernardas.com). “When you don't use expensive materials, you can show more easily the artistic side of the piece,” she said. Ms. Crespo sells her own rings and brooches alongside those of judiciously chosen Portuguese and international peers. “If something is in gold, people just think it's expensive. If it's in plastic, it's easier to show the creativity and innovation.”

The Santos design boom isn't limited to merchandise. Beneath the neighborhood's orange-tile roofs and wrought-iron balconies, high-end style is spilling out of shops and showrooms and filling new restaurants and nightspots as well. The airy, neo-industrial restaurant Santos de Lisboa (Largo Vitorino Damásio, 10f, 351-21-390-9471; www.santosdelisboa.com) fills at lunchtime with an under-40 crowd who scribble into notebooks and annotate book margins in between bites of house steaks (12 euros) and sips of cappuccino (1.50 euros).

When night descends on the cobblestones, the monied young professionals descend on [Yasmin](#) (Rua da Moeda 1a, 351-21-393-0074; www.yasmin-lx.com). The sultry DJ-spun jazz and sexy contemporary décor — polished concrete floor, Saarinen chairs — are complemented by equally attractive nouveau Portuguese specialties. Especially worthy during a recent visit were the grilled Azorean cheeses with a

mango-tomato-avocado-honey vinaigrette (9 euros), cod confit with sautéed spinach (20 euros) and robust deer loin with corn foam and grilled shiitake mushrooms (25 euros).

For a nightcap, don your rectangular glasses and join the media types and pre-clubbers at the totally white and totally angular Left (Largo Vitorino Damásio 3f, 351-21-395-1227), which looks like it rolled off the Apple assembly line. Or head to Estado Liquido (Largo de Santos 5a, 351-21-397-2022), a late-night hot spot that serves up ambient electronica and house [music](#) to crowds of young professionals and graduate students. Have a couple of 6-euro cocktails and put yourself to bed — along with any lingering stereotypes about Portugal's alleged lack of style.

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