

# the o SUNDAY

## Design Stars 2015

These six firms are creating the new must-see destinations in cities across the world—plazas transformed into majestic urban sculptures, restaurants that feel like time capsules, run with the tools of tomorrow, light-filled museums that upend our expectations about how to view art. Plus: six more much-anticipated design-driven openings. BY CHEE PEARLMAN



JOSÉ SELGAS AND LUCÍA CANO OF SELGASCANO, CREATORS OF THIS YEAR'S SERPENTINE PAVILION, IN THEIR HOME OFFICE OUTSIDE MADRID.

**COMMUNE**

EXPORTERS OF COOL CALIFORNIA ECLECTICISM.



From left: PARTNERS ROMAN ALONSO, STEVEN JOHANKNECHT, AND PAMELA SHAMSHIRI AT VERVE COFFEE ROASTERS IN WEST HOLLYWOOD. Right: THE ACE HOTEL DOWNTOWN L.A.



Maybe you've noticed the Golden State vibe that has become ubiquitous in restaurants and hotels: warm but cool, artisanal yet polished, jumbled while being immaculately curated. One of the style's leading lights is the southern California firm Commune (none of whose three members, ironically, is a West Coast native). At the Ace Hotel in downtown Los Angeles, which opened last year to instant acclaim, the firm brought a mash-up of minimalism and craft to the former United Artists film studio and theater with a lobby showcasing the work of local artisans and guest rooms with exposed concrete. That was their second Ace, following the conversion of a 1965 Howard Johnson Motor Lodge and former Denny's in Palm Springs into the Ace Hotel & Swim Club,

now a bastion of desert cool for its "hippie camping" aesthetic.

"Modernism in L.A. reinvented the way people live," says partner Pamela Shamshiri, who is originally from Iran. "Our work is about that freedom to embrace many histories and multiple narratives." They've applied this approach to projects outside California, like the American Trade Hotel, another venture of the Ace Hotel Group, in Panama City. For the new West Hollywood location of Verve Coffee Roasters ([vervecoffee.com](http://vervecoffee.com)), Commune mined another California trope, the blurring of inside and out: past the copper counter is a tiled patio with stadium seating. For the Durham Hotel ([thedurham.com](http://thedurham.com)), which opened this summer in North Carolina, the firm reconceived a mid-century bank building as an elegant boutique property. "You want each project to look like it's always been there," Shamshiri says. "To make it look effortless is the hardest thing."

**COMING SOON**

Their third Farmshop restaurant and market for chef Jeff Cerciello opens this month in Tokyo in a space that marries West Coast artisanship (Heath Ceramics wall tiles, Robert Lewis lighting) with Japanese craft.

FROM TOP: MISHA GRAVENOR; SPENCER LOWELL