

# Shopping

## Setting up shop

Some of BA's best brands are moving from private showrooms to fully-fledged shops. **Sophie Lloyd** talks to the designers taking on the challenge

**W**hile closed-door showrooms allow emerging designers to keep their overheads low by selling from their homes or private studios, many dream of opening a shop, where appointments aren't necessary, passers-by will see their wares and, crucially, the storeroom isn't their bedroom. *Time Out* rounds up the best of these new ventures.

### VINCENT

Martin Lubrano's handmade leather flats brought the smoking slipper trend to Buenos Aires in 2012. And while making slippers began as Lubrano's personal project, it quickly became a full-time job as his unique designs – characterised by playful embroidery and prints – caught the attention of the local fashion crowd. Like most young designers, Lubrano started small, operating from a discreet showroom space in Palermo Viejo, away from the busy hub of Palermo Soho. Due to increasing demand and an expanding stock that now includes a line of sublime leather bags, Lubrano opened a boutique on the edge of Palermo Soho in early 2015 (see p107).

'It enables us to meet our clients' needs more comfortably,' says

Lubrano. 'The biggest challenge was to ensure the same level of quality and craftsmanship with bigger levels of production.' Lubrano has also recently opened a stand in shopping centre Alcorta Shopping (see p100), so the brand's plush slippers are now available to the masses.

### JESSICA KESSEL

Having firmly established herself on the BA fashion scene with a much sought-after line of handmade women's shoes, Jessica Kessel moved from a Colegiales showroom in her apartment to a boutique on San Telmo's busy Defensa strip in early 2015 (see p96).

'From the beginning, I always wanted to have my own shop and the opportunity arose much sooner than I'd imagined,' says Kessel, who worked in her parents' antiques shop in San Telmo during her early twenties. 'As well as having more space in the shop, it's gratifying to have contact with new clients from the street and see their reactions when they stop and look in the window,

'My shoes are exclusive and they will continue to be so, whether they're available behind closed doors or not,' she adds.

For Kessel, it wasn't so much the transition from showroom to shop that was challenging, but getting hold of the leather needed to produce her designs. Leather sourcing remains an ongoing problem in Argentina, as most of what the country produces is intended for export and prices are set in US dollars, meaning that the equivalent amount in pesos fluctuates constantly.

### LENA MARTORELLO

For Martinica Lena and Joan Martorello, the duo behind avant-garde clothing line Lena Martorello, the opportunity to open a shared boutique with fellow designer Belén Amigo has allowed them to grow their conceptual brand into something more concrete and professional. The brand launched at the beginning of 2014, and had a showroom in Palermo Chico for less than a year before making the move to a boutique in swanky Recoleta (Talcahuano 1287, 4519 8083, [www.lenamartorello.com](http://www.lenamartorello.com)).

'The design and location of the shop create the level of exclusivity that comes with a showroom,' says Martorello. 'However, having a shop on the street allows us to reach a wider audience that may come across the shop by chance.'

While the design duo admits that issues with inflation and rising production costs make it difficult to plan too far ahead, they are hoping to expand their brand within Argentina and overseas in the not too distant future.

### GUARANÍ PORÁ

After a life-changing trip to Paraguay in 2006, Caro Urresti was inspired to bring the arts and crafts of the Guaraní region to Buenos Aires. In 2012, she opened a hidden showroom at the back of local womenswear designer Leandro Dominguez's boutique in Palermo Soho, selling a curated selection of original furnishings, artwork and other items related to Guaraní culture.

'A concept like Guaraní Porá requires a lot of time,' says Urresti. 'I had to take small, decisive steps. It's not just a matter of introducing new products to the Argentinian market, but also trying to communicate the cultural heritage of an unknown region.'

Finding the right space to open the shop was also problematic. 'I had to trust that I was going to find a suitable space in terms of location, cost and size. I spent a lot of time walking around and asking other friends with shops for advice,' says Urresti. Eventually, her patience paid off. In 2014, she found a charming space in Palermo Hollywood (see p108), where she regularly hosts events and exhibitions.

### DINAMARCA

Urban menswear label Dinamarca has been purveying the lumberjack look since 2007. Founders Lisandro and Diego received clients in their shared flat and showroom in Palermo Soho for the first few years, until in 2012, they gave up their day jobs (Lisandro was a professional basketball player and Diego a designer for a friend's brand) and moved to a bigger space in Palermo Hollywood. Three years later, they opened their first boutique (see p105) in the same neighbourhood.

'Our showroom and home was becoming increasingly full of boxes, buttons and rolls of fabric, not to mention Nilovsky (the dog) – who takes up a lot of space – so we decided it was time,' says Lisandro. The spirit of this humble beginning lives on in the boutique, which was designed to resemble a bedroom.

While other young designers speak of the economic struggles of having a business in Buenos Aires, Lisandro has only positive things to say. 'The current economy has had a positive effect on our business in that the menswear industry in Argentina continues to grow and the number of independent designers has risen, which makes us hopeful.'

*Time Out's* also hoping the spirit of independent design continues to flourish on BA's streets, paving the way for more talented designers to open up shop.

To explore BA's best showrooms and shops, sign up for Sophie Lloyd's shopping tours with Shop Hop BA ([www.shop-buenosaires.com](http://www.shop-buenosaires.com)).

Jessica Kessel's shoes are now gracing the streets of San Telmo