

GLOBETROTTER

Five hot cities. Five stylish residents. Here's an insider's guide to New York's, Beijing's, Tokyo's, London's and Paris' hottest neighborhoods of the moment.

REALISATION NATASHA CHOKSI
PHOTO RONNY SEQUEIRA.

REALISATION VLETA MEHRA, MODEL HERICA (ESKIMO MODELS), SHOES: CHANEL, CLUTCH: FENDI

BEIJING BOHO

The fastest evolving hipster 'hood in Beijing is a 1950s Soviet-funded, Bauhaus designed ex-electronics factory. Dashanzi art district, known simply as 798 to Beijingers, is the nucleus of the contemporary art scene and has grown into a cultural icon in a few short years. Hail a taxi in your kitten-heels and head out to 798 for cutting-edge design, shopping, bars and, of course, art....

KRISTINA PÉREZ.

There are many misnamed Sohos in Beijing these days, but the true heir to New York's bohemian art zone-cum-fashion mecca is Dashanzi. Unfortunately a large part of Beijing is being turned into the Chinese version of American suburbia in advance of the 2008 Olympics with identikit shopping malls and office complexes being built literally round the clock while the charming courtyard *hutongs* are torn down. Dashanzi is one of the few places to have been reinvigorated with cultural life early enough to avoid destruction. Several years ago a group of artists rented these vast, abandoned industrial spaces as studios; a large proportion of these artists were ABCs (American Born Chinese) or *haiguis* ('sea turtles'), referring to Chinese expats who have returned home. Both city and local governments, as well as international property developers, circled like vultures over Dashanzi with an eye to high-profit ventures. But the artists' cause was taken up by intellectuals and the media who finally prevailed in having it designated an official 'Culture and Creative Industrial Park' last year.

Some purists now fear the greatest danger facing Dashanzi is over exposure and commercialisation as most of the canvases flying off the gallery walls are headed for the US and Europe; while others welcome the trendy wi-fi cafes and clubkids it has attracted.

CAUSE FOR PAUSE

If debating the relative merits of globalisation is your bag than there is no better place to do it than at Café Pause in the heart of 798. Minimalist black leather interiors and mirrored walls are surprisingly cozy in the winter when the sandstorms are Beijingers' worst nemesis but airy and bright during the city's scorching summers. Café Pause serves the best brunch in town complete with homemade compote and a selection of cheeses—a rare commodity in China—as well as a fascinating assortment of cocktails, which explains why even the artistically challenged choose to while away their afternoons here. Get there early to snag a table on the terrace or in the chandelier-laden open-air atrium.

CAFÉ PAUSE, DASHANZI, NO. 2 JIUXIANQIAO LU, CHAOYANG DISTRICT, BEIJING. TEL. +86 10 6431 6214.

SPACED OUT

After quaffing an appropriate number of brunch-time Bellinis, hang a left and wander over to the 798 Photo Gallery, which shows both color and B&W art photography by emerging Chinese photographers capturing the changing face of China—a solid investment. There is also an excellent little gift shop selling less expensive prints if you are saving your pennies for the pearl market. Just next door is the namesake

798 Space, which was a weapons factory in a previous life and still has the bright red Mao slogans painted on the ceiling and a couple disused machines. If you're lucky you can catch an exhibition there sandwiched between a glam corporate product launch and a jazz concert. (Ask your concierge when you arrive in Beijing for any happenings while you're in town.) Proceed past the giant, white ceramic Red Guard head and shoulders into the At Café via its blink-and-you-miss-it boutique where you can purchase 10 *kuai* DVDs before they're out in the cinema and funky notebooks to record your time in the North Capital. After such a busy afternoon you deserve a caffeine fix in the At Café served to you by an immaculately dressed Chinese art student whose paintings you may be buying one day soon. Close your eyes and you'll swear you're sipping a café crème on the Boulevard Saint Germain as European and American accents fill the air. If, in fact, you are craving a piece of Paris then ask for the *mai dan* and grab a seat on the patio of the Vincent Café for crêpes and pastis.

798 PHOTO GALLERY, DASHANZI, NO. 4 JIUXIANQIAO LU, CHAOYANG DISTRICT, BEIJING. TEL. +86 10 6438 1784.
798 SPACE, DASHANZI, N. 4 JIUXIANQIAO LU, CHAOYANG DISTRICT, BEIJING. TEL. +86 10 6438 4862.
AT CAFÉ, DASHANZI, NO. 4 JIUXIANQIAO LU, CHAOYANG DISTRICT, BEIJING. TEL. +86 10 6438 7264.
VINCENT CAFÉ, DASHANZI, NO. 2 JIUXIANQIAO LU, CHAOYANG DISTRICT, BEIJING. TEL. +86 10 8456 4823.

NOT YOUR STANDARD SOUVENIRS

For fresh faces in Chinese art, swing by the Chinese Contemporary gallery, which was the first gallery in the West dedicated to avant-garde Chinese art with spaces in London and NYC, and pick up a Zhao Bo, Han Yajuan or Wu Junyong. Ask for Katie and tell her we sent you! If you don't have room in your suitcase for China's next Picasso, then why not pick up a luscious book to adorn your coffee table back home. Timezone 8 is famous in Beijing as the best foreign language art bookstore with an extraordinary range of glossy art, architecture, photography and design books as well as international art journals and magazines. Our advice is to hit this place first and buy a map of the district to avoid feeling trapped in the Minotaur's maze. Perhaps excess baggage is the least of your problems and you are just dying to infuse your pad with chic mod-Asian design? Then the understated Dashanzi showroom of Dara is a definite must. Here, find antique accessories, delicate fabrics, tableware, ceramics, contemporary art and much more.

CHINESE CONTEMPORARY, DASHANZI, NO. 4 JIUXIANQIAO LU, CHAOYANG DISTRICT, BEIJING. TEL. +86 10 8456 2421.
TIMEZONE 8 ART BOOKS, DASHANZI, NO. 4 JIUXIANQIAO LU, CHAOYANG DISTRICT, BEIJING. TEL. +86 10 8456 0336.
DARA, DASHANZI, NO. 2 JIUXIANQIAO LU, CHAOYANG DISTRICT, BEIJING. TEL. +86 10 6432 5217.

DASHANZI DUSK

When the sun sets and you're feeling a little peckish, hibernate in the Cave Café next to 798 Space; slouch into one of their comfy black and white couches, admire the exposed-brick walls and congratulate yourself for being so cultured. Not content to party with the plebs? Then hire out Dave's Factory for your own exclusive guest-list do. The luminescent white 'organically'-designed factory space is adorned with giant body-part sculptures and tropical plants. Dashanzi is also known for playing host to impromptu raves and the like, so keep your ear to the ground and check out local expat magazines.

CAVE CAFÉ, DASHANZI, NO. 4 JIUXIANQIAO LU, CHAOYANG DISTRICT, BEIJING. TEL. +86 10 8456 5520.
DAVE'S FACTORY, UPON REQUEST, DASHANZI, NO. 4 JIUXIANQIAO LU, CHAOYANG DISTRICT, BEIJING. FOR ENQUIRIES EMAIL: DAVE@DAVESFACTORY.COM



TOP TO BOTTOM, LEFT TO RIGHT, DASHANZI - 798 SPACE, CAFÉ PAUSE, DASHANZI VENUS, 798 POP ZHAO

