

LA WEEKLY



BEST
OF

LA
2010

L.A. THEN AND NOW • TIME-TRAVELING THROUGH OUR CITY

Shopping & Services

BEST GIFTS FOR YOUR GARDEN

Rolling Greens is for things for your garden you can't find at Home Depot — exotic plants and cacti, containers, statuary and other garden nonsense in four broad levels, sprawling down a hillside in the outer wilds of Culver City. I went there looking for some Mexican feather grass, that landscaping cliché that has become the staple of every new Southland mall. And, before you know it, I'm wandering and wondering. Would it be better to go with a cast-iron planter, or the zinc? Do I have space in the corner by the telephone pole for that nice wooden bodhisattva? And what about that topiary bush anyway? And I was thinking the distressed Mexican pottery would be good in my 4-foot patch of L.A. — maybe go for the whole post-Revolution hacienda-ruins look. Plenty of nonessential items to make your petty burgher dreams come true. 9528 Jefferson Blvd., Culver City. (310) 559-8656; also 7505 Beverly Blvd., Mid-City. (323) 934-4500, rollinggreensnursery.com.

—JEDD BIRKNER

BEST INK FOR CELEBRITY SKIN

Shamrock Social Club's motto has always been "Where the elite and the underworld meet," referencing the tattoo shop's popularity with both the rich and famous and the rough and raucous. But there's a reason the likes of Johnny Depp, Angelina and Brad, and one-word starlets like Britney and Lindsay choose Shamrock to get inked. Two words: **Mark Mahoney**. Reality TV may be exposing the tattoo world to a whole new audience these days, but it's the dapper Boston-born, L.A.-bred master of black-and-gray work who's managed to bridge the gap between gangsta street style and glamour-girl self-expression in real life. With "words and fonts" the current trend, who better than the guy who learned and perfected the style with other masters in East L.A.? Making his art for more than 30 years now, Mahoney is known for being collaborative as well as chill and discreet — surely appreciated by his high-profile clients. The current location opened in 2001 in a space that belonged to Bing Crosby back in the '30s and is, in fact, the least intimidating, most welcoming studio in town. Kids can mill about, artists play pool in the front area, stools invite patrons to hang out for a while. It really is a social club. There may be a several-months-long waiting list for the proprietor, but he's worth it. And if you need a quick fix, walk-ins with his equally formidable crew are always available. 9026 Sunset Blvd., W. Hlywd. (310) 271-9664.

—LINA LECARO

BEST PLACE TO BUY A WOODEN DUCK ONCE OWNED BY JEAN-MICHEL BASQUIAT

LeadApron is not your common-or-garden bookstore/art gallery. Venture inside the tucked-away Melrose Place storefront and you're likely to find objects you never knew your heart desired until now. Like a first-run edition of *Pass the Bitch Chicken*, by Harmony Korine and the painter Christopher Wool (\$250). Or No. 102 of the 172 copies of Jason Rhoades' 1724 *Birth of the Cunt*, with a bookmark made from the elastic band of a girl's panties (\$3,750). How about two screen prints from Andy Warhol's first international retrospective at Stockholm's Moderna Museet, in 1968 (\$9,000)? And no household would be complete without a wooden duck, specifically one that was a gift from Jean-Michel Basquiat to

his then-girlfriend Kelle Inman. See, don't you just need one now? Sigh. 8445 Melrose Place, W. Hlywd. (323) 782-1888, leadapron.net.

—CAROLINE RYDER

BEST NOSE CANDY

Art bookstores, record stores, some clothing stores, wine stores — all these are places where browsing can turn into a sensual experience. The senses engaged are generally the more common four, but Silver Lake's **Spice Station**, like a culinary perfume



store, adds the fifth dimension. Here you can find couples sharing the aromas that pour out of a curated array of stylish jars, all annotated with provenance and description of the tastes. You never heard of the legendary Ghost Pepper Salt, reputedly the hottest salt in the world? Here, you'll not only learn about it, you'll get to smell it, and take a bit of it home (trust me, a little goes a lo-o-o-ong way) for not that much. How about Urfa, the dried Turkish pepper that tastes a little like figs and raisins and brown sugar but, you know, spicy? Same thing. There's also an annex selling gourmet tea leaves. And, in case your other senses get jealous, Forage restaurant, the Secret Headquarters comic-book store and the vinyl-only Vacation record store are all nearby. 3819 W. Sunset Blvd., Sunset Junction. (323) 660-2565, spicestationsilverlake.com.

—GUSTAVO TURNER

BEST OLD-FASHIONED HEALTH-FOOD MARKET (1970)

Glistening health-food emporiums abound these days, showcasing foods and health-related products as if somehow the idea of eating naturally, locally, organically and mindfully never existed before. To add

insult to injury (and justify their absurdly high prices), these same establishments sell dead chickens, cows, pigs and their assorted brethren as "healthy" just because during life they ate nothing but processed grain or grass. Here's an alternative: Follow your head to **Follow Your Heart**, a market, café and one-stop shop for everything organic, natural, vegetarian, local,

eco-friendly and sustainable. It's been thriving in the same spot for four decades, in a building that's been standing for five. The staff consists of devoted vegetarians who can intelligently discuss the merits of selenium or the dangers of combining St. John's Wort with certain prescription meds, or give you the rundown on local alternative-health care practitioners. The store has its own line of food products, also called Follow Your Heart, all manufactured in its own solar-powered plant nearby, thus reducing that banded-about expression "carbon footprint" the health megastores seem to ignore. And you can get the same crystals, healing remedies, yoga mats, tiedie duds and supplements at a fraction of the price. 21825 Sherman Way, Ganoga Park. (818) 348-3240, followyourheart.com.

—HEIDI DVORAK

BEST WESTSIDE FROZEN PUPUSAS (1990)

El Camaguey Meat Market is a Westside mainstay and emporium for all things Latin American. I usually stop by when I have a hankering for Bolivian beer to wash down a slab of fresh *chicharrón*. But I could always get a bottle of Imperial and reminisce about the humidity and bad roads in Costa Rica. Whether you're looking for a can of sugarcane juice (*guarapo*), soda from Colombia, yellow cherries from Spain, yellow potatoes from Peru or just some passion-fruit ice cream, El Camaguey is the place. Perhaps wormwood and mugwort; I found them among the spices

and assume they must be used for evil magic. And there are multiple brands of frozen *pupusas*! *Selección, selección, selección!* 10925 Venice Blvd., Culver City. (310) 839-4037.

—JEDD BIRKNER

BEST GEE-GAWS, GIZMOS & GROMMETS (1938)

When **Koontz Hardware** opened for business in West Hollywood in 1938, Home Depot, which didn't build a store until 1979, wasn't even a concept. Serving customers all over the Westside, Koontz's huge inventory of screws, washers, light-bulbs, hammers, saws, doorknobs and innumerable gizmos quickly made the store a favorite with contractors, regular folks and, of course, celebrities. It's said that Jack Paar, the legendary radio and TV talk-show host, once spent 20 minutes on air talking about Koontz with actress Zsa Zsa Gabor. Although an arsonist burned the original building to the ground in 1982, and Home Depot's success has closed many a great neighborhood hardware store, Koontz, in its brown-brick building in the heart of Boys Town, is thriving. It offers a 120,000-piece inventory, including many hard-to-find items on shelves that tower 16 feet high. The selection can be intimidating, but you quickly learn that its extraordinarily knowledgeable and friendly staff — many of whom have been working there for years — will guide you to exactly what you need. And that's even if you didn't know what it was called or what you really needed. 8914 Santa Monica Blvd., W. Hlywd. (310) 652-0123, koontz.com.

—PATRICK RANGE McDONALD

BEST PRIVATE PRESS

Jonathan Sample, co-founder of Hollywood's **Fresh Pressed** screen-printing workshop, has lofty aims for his little storefront, founded in 2007. "We're really set up to make screen-printing available to the masses — everyone who works here is an artist or a designer. We all have an affinity for lost arts — screen-printing, engraving, letterpressing." Small quantities of screen-printed T-shirts are produced — one is the optimal quantity — and can be done quickly. They're unique shirts made as someone's unique art: The person making the shirt acts as creative director, all the way down to pulling the paint squeegee. Fresh Pressed offers its screen-printing facilities to everyone from Adidas to a 5-year-old making a shirt to give to his grandma. Many up-and-coming bands take advantage of the facilities to make limited-edition runs of shirts or poster prints. There's also a "Labor of Love" program: Grooms- and brides-to-be print their own invitations and, as Sample puts it, "add to the romance and experience of building something together prior to their wedding." What could be more romantic than starting your life together with messy hands? 4646 Hollywood Blvd., Los Feliz. (323) 663-7374, freshpressed.com.

—DAVID COTNER

BEST LITERARY STEW (1975)

One of the last large independent bookstores in Southern California, **Book Soup**, which bills itself as the "Bookseller to the Great and Infamous," survived the death of longtime owner Glenn Goldman in 2009, as well as the competition from Internet shopping and the huge chain bookstores and their discounted wares. In fact, according to Book Soup staff, the West Hollywood landmark is booming. A big reason for that is Vroman's, a major independent bookstore in Pasadena, which bought Book Soup after Goldman died, and over the past