

## MUMBAI'S BEST NEW SHOPS



See big The Hab is one of the most spacious tailoring supply stores

### The Hab by Usha

For years, picking out matching lace or good-quality zippers at tailoring supply stores like Cheap Jack on Hill Road has been similar to shopping for hair ties in a ladies compartment during rush hour. The activity is mostly hasty and confusing and often requires more than one trip. But that's all set to change with Usha International's first mammoth-sized concept store, aptly branded as The Hab (short for haberdashery), and conveniently sandwiched between some of the best fabric stores like Glanz, Saroj and Vandana on Linking Road.

Almost like an adult version of Hobby Ideas, The Hab is sure to convert the most craft-loathing individuals with its motto, "A hipper side of sewing". And hip it is, with a neon-coloured sewing machine installation in the window display by Manish Arora, four plush demo stations: the basic stitching pod, the embroidery pod, the footer pod and the craft pod, all equipped with the latest Usha Janome automatic and computerised sewing machines, and a permanent team of fashion experts to help you create the patterns of your DIY dreams.

The walls glimmer like candy store displays with neatly organised racks of tailoring tools, DIY kits, lace, ribbon, stones, beads, buttons, sequins, zippers and threads in every shape, size and colour imaginable (₹4-216). Some Hab exclusives include pincushions shaped like teapots, dress forms and even tomatoes; buttons and beads in neon hues and zigzag, printed and textured sequins.

Newbies can get lost browsing through the ceiling to floor stitch

library featuring stitches like climber stitch, zigzag stitch, honey-comb stitch, diamond stitch and box stitch beautifully illustrated on embroidery tambours. On the other side of the room, even the most experienced sewing machinist will be blown away by the Usha Janome Memory Craft 11000, which allow users to embroider any image uploaded using a USB flash drive with robotic precision. We were nothing short of hypnotised as the machine embroidered a cute yellow duck from its built-in embroidery library and then went over the whole design with a thick black outline.

A spiral staircase from the ground floor takes you to a library stocked with speciality art and craft books like *Layered, Tattered and Stitched*, a book on fabric art by multi-media artist Ruth Rae, *One Yard Wonders* by Rebecca Yaker on everything you can create using just one yard of fabric and *Dare to Be Square Quilting* by Boo Davis. Apart from free in-store demos through the day, The Hab will also host regular introductory and advanced courses on sewing, embroidery, other embellishments and craft workshops to cultivate a community of like-minded sewing enthusiasts. The space has already become home to many students from fashion schools in and around Bandra and first-time designers looking for unusual accessories, so we recommend you plan your visit by calling in advance to avoid disappointment.

#### Prerna Makhija

444, Corporate Lounge, opposite Sahib Khatawara Darbar, Linking Road, Khar (W) (6127-4444). Daily 10am-9.30pm. DIY kits from ₹750. Workshops ₹150-500.

### Obataimu

After countless multi-designer boutiques and India-inspired kitsch shops, we may be welcoming the new indie design stores a little too quickly, but can you really blame us? Obataimu by Noorie Sadarangani is the third design studio to open a retail outlet in downtown Mumbai this year. Housed in a matchbox-sized space next to Kala Ghoda Café, it follows Diya Thakur's Design Temple, near the Taj Mahal Palace Hotel in Colaba and advertising executive Alok Nanda's Filter just a few metres away on VB Gandhi Marg.

The new store reminded us of a carnival fun house with doors that open wide for you to meet "nostalgia meets futurism", which means black-and-white-checkered tiles and a coffee table designed from an old scooter with an attached sidecar parked on the street outside, a vintage-style trash can and a giant three-headed surgical lamp that instantly makes you feel like a dwarf. The spirit of whimsy is further reflected in the label's diverse product line ranging from clothing for men and women and bed linen to furniture, jewellery and a host of other collectibles.

At present, this hipster-chic heaven offers dresses in candy-coloured stripes with heart-shaped cut-outs at the back, T-shirts with cheeky lines like "Don't call me I'll call you" and "I will keep you wild", and "Desperate" bed sheets that come packed in a cloth bag with

a "Will you sleep with me?" print, all in "cloud cotton". The label claims "cloud cotton" is a kind of cotton fabric treated with several rounds of enzyme washes to make it super-soft "like the old T-shirt you love". Other fabrics developed in-house include aero-mul, liquid silk, vapourised viscose and a cotton fabric that mimics the feel of cotton linen. We spotted liquid silk put to use in an impeccably finished one-shoulder dress with the sleeve designed to look like a peacock and imitation linen used to create a range of skinny pants and shorts for men in pop cases. There's also a range of iPad cases and hip flasks and vintage Polaroid cameras in covers made from fish leather (made using local fish skin), tanned in fun colours like lime green and orange.

Other limited edition products that caught our fancy include a huge desktop hourglass to remind you to take a minute off for yourself, custom-made necklaces and cuff links made from old typewriter keys, hand-carved wooden spectacles, and clutches in wood and bright-coloured lacquer. The price for cool, as expected, is quite steep, starting at ₹1,500 for a T-shirt and going up to ₹25,300 for a vintage Polaroid camera. **Prerna Makhija** 13, Ropewalk Lane, next to Kala Ghoda Café, Kala Ghoda ([www.obataimu.com](http://www.obataimu.com)). Email orders@obataimu.com for more details. Daily 11am-10pm. Clothing ₹2,000-15,000, gifts and collectibles ₹1,500-7,000.

### Shehla

Designer Shehla Khan's flagship boutique in Colaba showcases two of the biggest Summer 2012 trends – lace and pastels. The store's glamorous champagne-coloured interiors, with ornate ceiling borders, marble flooring and a crystal chandelier, are fit for a princess's walk-in closet, complete with couture gowns, short party dresses, intricately embroidered saris and extravagant kurta sets in marshallm hues.

It's easy to explain Khan's obsession with lace – her family owns Saks India, a leading supplier of lace and embroidery to luxury brands like Escada and Elie Saab. The London College of Fashion and Instituto Marangoni graduate currently retails a mix of her prêt-à-porter, primo and atelier lines, which combine modern silhouettes with traditional Indian embroidery and lace. While it's

safe to browse through the ready-to-wear line (from ₹8,000), we recommend you steer clear of the couture racks. It's going to be hard to resist the organza mini with appliqué flowers in blush-pink and baby-blue and the Audrey Hepburn-style sheath dress in French Chantilly lace (from ₹52,000).

We were most impressed by the Indian wear (from ₹14,000) in a soft palette with shadow work, chikankari and badia work, an antidote for wedding functions where garish embroidery and deep reds, pinks and greens dominate. We fell in love with a mint green chikan kurta set and a champagne coloured sari hand-painted with silver motifs. Now all we need is an invitation to a royal wedding so we can go back to splurge like royalty.

#### Prerna Makhija

Suleman Chamber, Ground Floor, Battery Street, Colaba (2287-6600). Daily 11am-8pm.