

Atlantic Ave, Boerum Hill, Brooklyn

Whether you have rug rats or despise those who do, you'll find playthings aplenty on Atlantic Avenue.

By Allison Williams

① Acorn Toy Shop

Brooklyn's biggest export is no longer hiptards—it's babies. To serve the boom, Acorn stocks more educational and community-minded toys than you can shake a fair-trade rattle at. Mack play tents (\$315) in bright colors replace the old-fashioned pillow and blanket fort, and a wooden animal menagerie (\$13–\$25) has all the variety of a Noah's Ark set without the pesky religious literalism. Playthings don't come cheap, but in more than three years, not a single toy sold by Acorn has been recalled.

② Maleeka

East meets West in Maleeka Ahmed's eponymous boutique, which is interestingly selective about exactly where that East and West are. Ahmed's Pakistani background means multicolored earrings and necklaces in warm, rich hues (\$49–\$175), but a recent influx of work from European, specifically Finnish, designers shakes things up. Clothes here manage to be loud, delicate and sophisticated all at once, an impressive hat trick for garments

priced starting at \$7. Ahmed's first name means "princess," so it's no wonder her trove of goodies has royal variety and exuberance.

③ Vintage Signage

Thank soda, beer and gasoline brands for keeping the world in kitsch. The walls at this antique trove are lined with the Pop Art of advertisements from owner Marc Saccone's personal collection, but the most exciting finds are littered about the small floor space. A Sinclair gasoline pump (\$700) from Connecticut would cost you \$2,000 online, according to proprietor Saccone. Don't miss his prized 1957 Seabird 200 jukebox (\$8,500), on which Saccone plays the Doors' "The End" to terminate each day.

④ Hollander and Lexter

A gentleman's shop for the wanna-be old-school dandy, Hollander and Lexter has the same musty-but-elegant feel as nearby antique shop Darr, also run by owners Brian Cousins and Hicham Benmira. Shirts from their own line (\$160) are pre-rumpled casual, while Lady Gray jewelry (\$200–\$380) dares the dapper man to accessorize with skull-and-bones pieces. The old white men's portraits that line the walls have the vague familiarity of lesser-known presidents like Taft and Fillmore, and in that spirit you can find a pocket copy of the U.S. constitution (\$25).

⑤ Opalia Flowers

The life of a flower may be fleeting, but the intoxicating smell of this

floral boutique seems eternal. No emphasis on exotic buds flown in from faraway lands here; owner Phoebe Cray prefers homegrown picks like anemones from Dutchess County. The custom-made bouquets at any price are based on these local blooms; delivery minimum is \$50, but they'll do a lovely \$25 bunch if you're a broke-ass walk-in. Popping your head in for a fragrant whiff, however, is absolutely free.

⑥ Rico

Once upon a time, before you joined the cult of Ikea and Bed Bath & Beyond, you had an idea of what a grown-up apartment looked like. Thankfully, Rico knows exactly what adult decor should be, selling minimalist sofas, tables and lighting that say "Fancy a cocktail?" not "My brother-in-law let me have this for free!" Clean-lined sofas from American Leather, Thayer Coggin and Della Robbia start at around \$2,000, while owner-designer Rico Espinet's own lights (\$75–\$500) polish off the mod vibe with sharp, sculptural floor lamps and chandeliers.

⑦ Butter

Be cautious with Butter—it's easy to fall for a deceptively simple \$698 beaded belt only moments after entering this beloved boutique. Here even the color-blind can feel at home, with black, white and dark blue representing the majority of the store's palette. Haute brands such as

Rick Owens, Marni and Martin Margiela echo the store's international reach. And like the food for which it's named, overindulging in these unabashedly simple pieces isn't always healthy—for your wallet, anyway.

⑧ Omala

The silky feel of Omala's yoga outfits make them almost too sumptuous for a pastime more about strengthening your mind and body than pampering. Bamboo fibers make up the most touchable pieces in the house line, and 10 percent of profits from the locally made clothing line benefit eco-activism nonprofit The Nature Conservancy. Combo pant and skirt bottoms ("Skeggings," \$70) put a little swing (and a little extra coverage) into your downward-facing dog pose, while the iPod dress (\$90) with an mp3 player pocket combines your love of Vampire Weekend with things that make you go "om."

⑨ Artez'n

You could get a crash course in Brooklyn style at this boutique-cum-gallery, fueling borough pride with quirky purses and silk-screened baby onesies. Need to become Brooklyn certified, and fast? Flash back, ironically, with a shrinky dink-making class (\$40, booze included), score some activist "Develop Don't Destroy Brooklyn" wear (\$28) and doodle in a retro-minded Barbie optic-bound journal (\$25). Surrounded by all those local artists, you'll be scoffing your way across the Manhattan bridge in no time.

1 Acorn Toy Shop
323 Atlantic Ave
between Hoyt and
Smith Sts
(718-522-3760,
acorntoyshop.com)
Kinderkram
Excavator, \$105

3 Vintage Signage
334 Atlantic Ave
between Hoyt and
Smith Sts
(718-834-9268)



5 Opalia Flowers
362 Atlantic Ave
between
Bond and Hoyt Sts
(718-643-9160,
opaliaflowers.com)

6 Rico
384 Atlantic Ave
between Bond and Hoyt
Sts (718-797-2077, shoprico.com)
Rico Espinet Olinda lamp, \$295

7 Butter
389 Atlantic Ave
between Bond
and Hoyt Sts
(718-260-9033,
shopbutter.com)

8 Omala
400 Atlantic Ave
between
Bond and Hoyt Sts
(718-694-9642, omala.com)
Bamboo double-strap cami, \$60

2 Maleeka
327 Atlantic Ave
between Hoyt and
Smith Sts
(718-596-0991,
maleeka.com)



4 Hollander and Lexter
358 Atlantic Ave
between
Bond and Hoyt Sts
(718-797-9190)
Hollander and Lexter shirt, \$160



9 Artez'n
444 Atlantic Ave
between
Bond and Nevins Sts
(718-596-2649, artezn.com)