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FOUR SQUARE BLOCKS: WILLIAMSBURG

Mostly True Grit

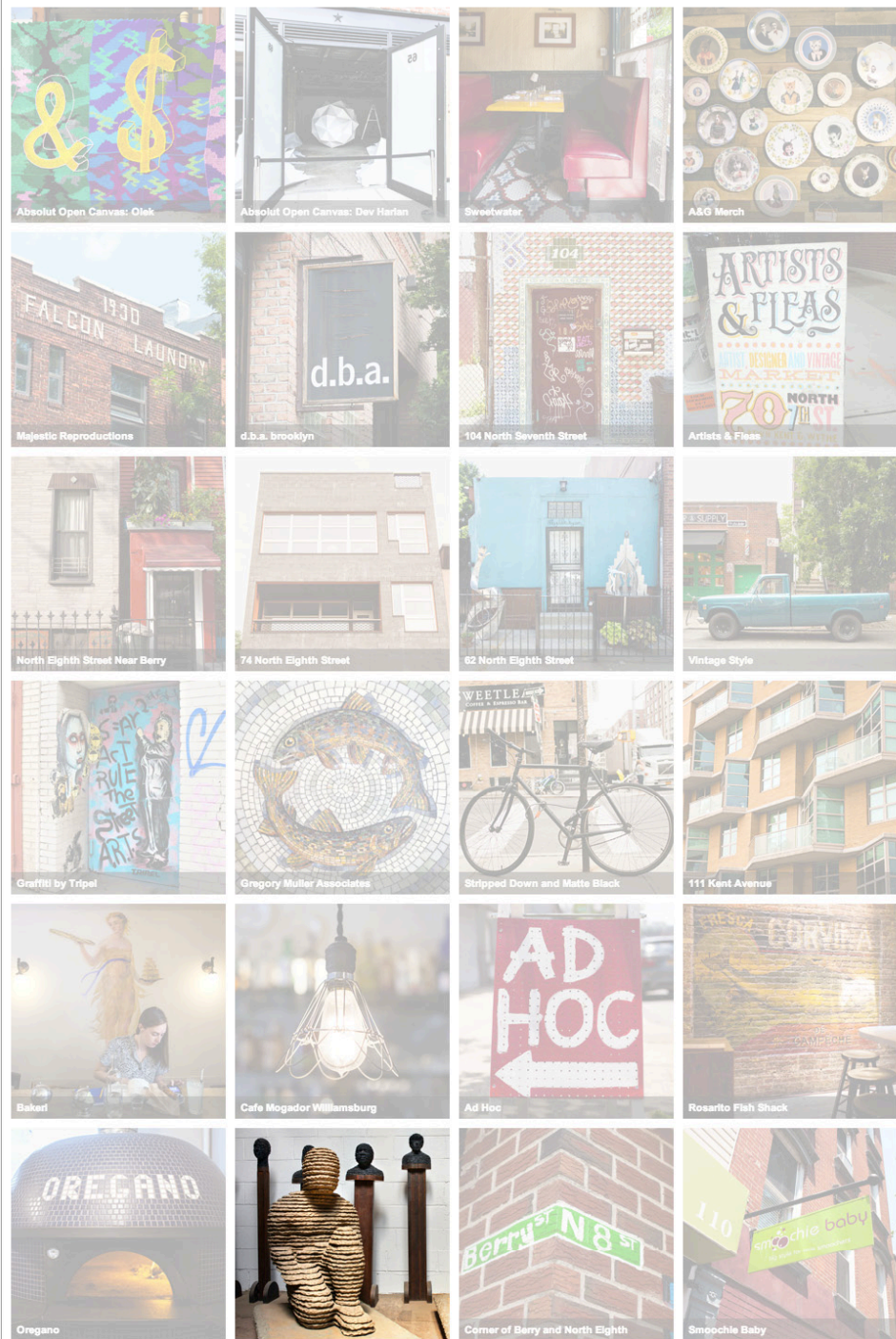
By JULIE LASKY
 Published: June 26, 2013

When the Future Perfect opened a decade ago in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, its only real competitors were vintage furniture and resale shops. North Sixth Street, where the company put down roots, was “desolate,” its owner, David Alhadeff, recalled. But his building had big windows like those in an art gallery, and Mr. Alhadeff, who offered high-concept design to an audience browsing for art, cultivated the resemblance. He sold chandeliers made of antlers and bureaus resembling stacks of firewood, helping to define what has come to be known as Brooklyn style.

Today, Williamsburg is the capital of that aesthetic. And many more area shops carry cheeky contemporary design, although the Future Perfect is not one of them. On Monday, Mr. Alhadeff closed his doors, to concentrate on his stores in Manhattan and San Francisco. He leaves behind a neighborhood crammed with color, vibrancy and all manner of covetable objects.



In the first of a series of articles on places where design is flourishing, we look at one of the most animated centers of visual culture. Specifically, the four blocks around the Future Perfect's former site in Williamsburg — from North Sixth Street to North Eighth Street and from Berry Street to Kent Avenue — where a narrative of gentrification unfolds through design.



Berry Street

CLOSE

Boaz Vaadia Studios

Mr. Vaadia, an Israeli-born artist represented in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Jewish Museum, bought this former rigging company garage in 1989 to use as a studio. He had previously worked in SoHo but was tempted by the prospect of owning a space so big he could drive a forklift in it. There he displays his massive sculptures made of bluestone, a material he salvaged from the ripped-up pavements of Lower Manhattan. “I ran away from SoHo,” he said, referring to the commercialism of his former neighborhood. “It was too hard to be there.” He would like a bigger space in Williamsburg but can't afford it, he said.

104 Berry Street, (718) 387-1913, vaadia.com



Robert Wright for The New York Times