

**INSIDE LOOK**  
From above: The interior of De Ridder Concept: België, a boutique with mostly Belgian brands; Bar Schmitz, which offers everything from coffee to crêpes; Kenkawai, a chic home-décor and skin-care shop.

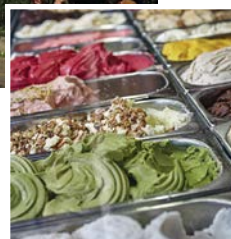


**FOOD FOR THOUGHT**

Above: Metzgerei Schmitz, one of a group of four hangouts on Aachener Strasse. Below: Spatz, a health-food cafe and coffee shop.



**SET THE SCENE**  
From left: Bar Schmitz's interior; a view of the neighborhood; gelato at Bar Schmitz.



NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH

## BELGIAN QUARTER

Cologne's young designer district is home to a modern mix of restaurants, shops and galleries.

BY SARA LIEBERMAN

**I**F THE "DOM" CATHEDRAL in Cologne, Germany, dating back to 1248 and standing tall above the Rhine River, is the city's religious and architectural epicenter, then **Schmitz**, a group of four eateries located on the Belgian Quarter's main artery of Aachener Strasse, is the city's hipster heart. Creative locals descend at any hour of the day—be it for a Kölsch, a coffee or a plate of Strammer Max (two fried eggs with tomatoes and gherkins on German bread). This quadrant of coolness represents the area's emerging art, fashion and food scenes, and concept shops, galleries and juice cafes have popped up on the quarter's four main blocks.

After a yoga class at **Lord Vishnus Couch**, an oasis hidden in a neighborhood courtyard, it's time to shop. Start at **De Ridder Concept: België**, a fashion-focused boutique on Lütticher Strasse that opened in April 2015 and features mostly Belgian brands, such as Essentiel Antwerp and Wouters & Hendrix.

Around the block on Maastrichter Strasse, there's store after store, beginning with **Simon und Renoldi**, which offers a mix of luxe international items, including Teatox teas, Votivo candles and Sonia by Sonia Rykiel clutches. Farther down, Johnny Cash plays in the background at **Schee**, a loftlike space filled with wrought-iron lamps, graphic posters and porcelain pottery from Danish duo Meyer-Lavigne. Across the road, the men's clothing store **Monsieur Courbet** offers the likes of Elvine outerwear, Komono watches and a range of old and new vinyl.

Venture up the block to visit **Die Kunstagentin Gallery**, where whitewashed, exposed-brick walls feature pieces by artists including Swoon and Stefan Strumbel. At the recently renovated **Kunstbruder**, a multilevel gallery and restaurant on Händel Strasse, walls are covered in graffitied canvases of American icons such as Andy Warhol and Marilyn Monroe, and spicy samosas, chicken tikka and local beer from Handcraft & Co. are available in the lounge area.

Those who prefer a slice of vegan "wellness" banana bread should try health-food cafe and coffee shop **Spatz**, which opened last February on Antwerpener Strasse near Brüsseler Platz, the area's main (but small) square.

End the day on a peaceful note at **Kenkawai**, a home-décor and skin-care shop filled with beauty products from Susanne Kaufmann, the Organic Pharmacy and Dr. Hauschka. There's even a sunlit spa room to receive cosmetic treatments.