

STYLE DISPATCH



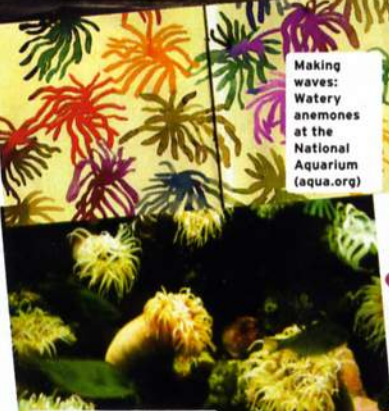
Home of *The Wire*, John Waters, Jenna Bush, and ecstatic art collective Wham City, this crab cake-cropolis got its claws in our trench-coated trend-trawler **Leanne Shapton** from the moment she arrived. Life in this tough yet sweet seaport of insiders, outsiders, and rich lore veers from high to low art, whether it's dog strolling over chic Federal Hill, a giant bra ball sculpture, music appreciation at the Peabody Conservatory, or beers at Cross Street Market. Like Old Bay Seasoning, a local staple, the city is plenty spicy.

BALTIMORE, MARYLAND

Fully attached: The famous row houses on historical Federal Hill



Making waves: Watery anemones at the National Aquarium (aqua.org)



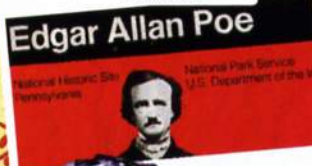
Trashalicious: John Waters photographs on postcards at Atomic Books (atomicbooks.com)



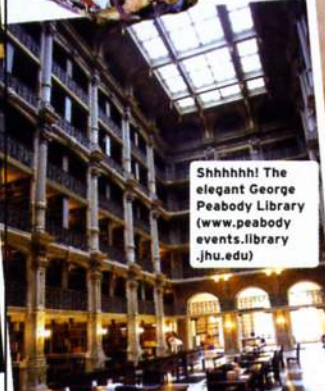
Felt up! Multi-culti felt boobies at Atomic Pop in Hampden (3620 Falls Rd.)



Misery is manifold: Printed pamphlets from the Poe House and Museum



Busting out: A giant ball of bras at the American Visionary Art Museum (avam.org)



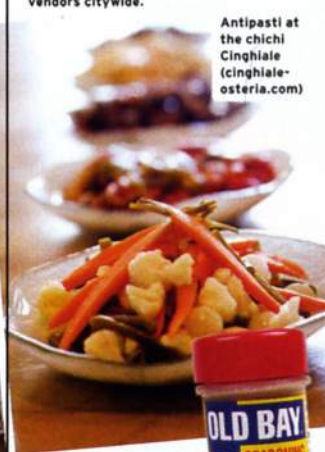
Shhhhhh! The elegant George Peabody Library (www.peabodyevents.library.jhu.edu)



The pretty parlor at 4 East Madison Inn (4eastmadisoninn.com)



Feeling crabby? Find bright plastic crabs from tourist vendors citywide.



Antipasti at the chichi Cinghiale (cinghiale-osteria.com)

Local flavor



EATING & SLEEPING

SWEET AND SAVORY CAKES

I bunked at 4 East Madison Inn, a townhouse converted to a characterful guesthouse, where co-owner Sandy Lawler made the best banana pancakes I've. Ever. Tasted. My lunch, the "Hon" Salad at the beehive Cafe Hon in the collegiate Hampden district, energized me for browsing awesome Atomic Books (atomicbooks.com). Come supper time, pair J. W. Faidley's lump crab cakes (faidleyscrabcakes.com) with local winery Basignani's 2006 from Bin 604 (bin604.com).



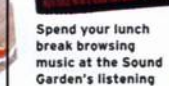
Cherry baby: Earrings from the American Visionary Art Museum (avam.org)



A kimono for aspiring salonistas (womansindustrialexchange.org)



Beggin' for it: Industrial Exchange dog biscuit and a dog sweater from Dudley & Max (1635 Thames St.)



Spend your lunch break browsing music at the Sound Garden's listening stations.



LANDER STICK DEODORANT

All this useless beauty: Jar lids from AVAM



SHOPPING

HAUTE DOGS

My favorite discovery was the handicrafts at the nonprofit Woman's Industrial Exchange. I found an alpaca cardigan for my nephew and a deep-sleeved kimono—perfect for losing pencils in (plumblossomkimono.com)—plus a Union Jack sweater my dog refused to wear. He liked his handmade Dudley & Max cookie, though (1635 Thames St.). At the Sound Garden in Fell's Point, I sampled music by Dan Deacon of surging art collective Wham City, whose moves I'm watching closely.

INSPIRATION

LOVE YOUR ANEMONES

When was the last time you went to an aquarium? Baltimore's sits on the harbor, so you feel one with the marine life. The sharks in the dizzying open ocean tower were too quick, so I caught the sea anemones in my sketchbook. Also fun: meta-nude studies of felt boobies from indie toy and art store Atomic Pop. I hummed Nina Simone's "Baltimore" while snapping row houses in Federal Hill and found more Salty Balty flavor in *The Ultimate John Waters DVD Collection*.

SIGHTSEEING

POE FOLK

Top of my list was the Edgar Allen Poe House (203 Amity St.), where the author wrote the gruesome "Berenice," circa 1834. Curator Jeff Jerome evokes a hard-knock life in the cramped quarters. Poe might have liked the George Peabody Library's (opened 1878) vast iron galleries, leading to musty stacks, footfalls echoing on the marble. Find self-taught artists' work at the American Visionary Art Museum and cunning curios (tiny plastic hot dogs and retro jar lids) in the gift shop.

All still lifes: Len Lagrus; salad: Dean Alexander; remaining images: courtesy of Leanne Shapton