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Second Life | The Invisible Dog Barks Again

By *SHONNI ENELOW*

Photo by Lucien Zayan The factory that made the Invisible Dog leash is being transformed into a three-story art center.

It is often said that trends come and go. But when the fad's over and the tastemakers move on, what happens to the factories, the packed stockrooms, the advertisements and salespeople left in the rubble?

The stripped industrial edifice behind the Shop Art Gallery in Cobble Hill, Brooklyn, is one particularly dazzling example of life after death. The raw space was home to a midcentury belt factory owned by a former army pilot that made a splash in the 1970s with its campy Invisible Dog trick — the stiff leash and harness that, surrounding nothing, uncannily suggested a small, invisible dog.

It was all the rage at hot spots like Studio 54 (go figure), and business boomed through the '70s before waning in the '90s. The legendary Invisible Dog came to a rather ignominious end as a theme-park prize. When the owner died in 2004, the building was deserted until December of last year, when the former financial analyst Muriel Guépin leased the storefront and turned it into a [small art gallery](#). But the mammoth structure behind the gallery lay fallow until Lucien Zayan, a recent Paris transplant, stumbled upon it and discovered its captivating history.

Zayan is now in the process of transforming the building into a three-story art center in collaboration with Guépin and the new owners of the building. They're committed to keeping the rents low and the energy high: the second and third floors will house art and design studios, and the roof will be transformed into a community garden open to the public. For now, Zayan has turned the ground floor into a weekend thrift store, selling off the strange and fascinating artifacts that were abandoned when the factory closed. (The space officially opens May 9.) The only thing he won't sell is the 200 remaining units of the original Invisible Dog, several of which he has hung on the unfinished walls like guard dogs to a begotten era.