



By Caroline Li

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There's a new kid on the block in Pioneer Square, the historic neighborhood characterized by specialty goods and narrow storefronts. Walk too fast and you may bypass the small fashion boutique without even noticing. But if you step inside Bossi & Ich Ky, along First Avenue South, you'll see it's more than the usual brick and mortar.

"I wanted my business to be in an up-and-coming neighborhood," says Ly Tran, a recent graduate of the International Academy of Design and

Technology in Seattle, where she received her associate of applied science degree in fashion design in June 2006.

Afterwards, she returned to IADT as a client of "The Studio," an innovative design group sponsored by IADT-Seattle's Interior Design program.

The program functions in the same way as a professional interior design firm, and studio staff is composed of IADT student designers who work under the direction of the interior design program chair.

"Bossi" is Ly's nickname for her boyfriend and business partner, Tuan Nguyen, and "ich ky" is Vietnamese for selfish — Nguyen's nickname for Tran. Though she doesn't sell any of her own designs yet, the boutique's interior is a reflection of Tran's personal style as well as her innate business know-how.

Tran knew that a successful retail operation relied heavily on the ambiance, or the unique selling environment, that is created for its customers. The boutique fits its location well, with its vintage spiral staircase and furniture to match.

Tran wanted her boutique to have a classic European vintage look that blended in with the other businesses and the old Seattle look and feel of the neighborhood. Baby blue and dark brown vintage wallpaper accents a back wall that complements the color and texture of the other brick walls. Generous burgundy-colored velvet draperies softly accent the windows and the fitting rooms, while a grand European-style, antique black chandelier hangs from the ceiling.

"I love everything that is vintage," she says, as she plops onto the velvet, backless sofa that sits outside the shop's dressing rooms.

But there's nothing vintage or retro about the clothes at Bossi & Ich Ky. Tran shows her other love for pop culture and class by stocking her boutique with contemporary designs by today's popular fashion labels for men and women, including Dondup, Mike and Chris, Grey Ant and Hemyca.

Growing up, Tran watched a lot of television, especially Hollywood and music awards shows and feature films. She's even guilty of indulging in celebrity sightings and gossip. She says her inspiration comes from whatever mood she's in, which can be affected by anything from history and movies to TV and the weather.

"I do love big hair," says Tran as she searches for examples of Hollywood hairdos for her model prepping in the back room for the boutique's monthly fashion shoot.

Born in post-war Vietnam, Tran first moved to Thailand and then to the Philippines as a refugee before arriving in Seattle. The second oldest of five children, Tran lived in a one-bedroom house with her parents and siblings. Years ago, back in her original birthplace of Vietnam, Tran's mother was a sewing teacher.

In the U.S., Tran's mother earned a living by sewing bed sheets for the U.S. Army and backpacks for JanSport. It was common among immigrants for whole families to take part. They'd take the materials home and sew them for 90 cents a piece, recalls Nguyen.

The doors to Bossi and Ich Ky opened on April 14. For Tran, this is just the beginning. Though Tran doesn't remember her early childhood living in Vietnam, she eventually wants to start her own company in her hometown of Kien Giang in South Vietnam. There are also plans to add a vintage hair salon to the retail operation by 2009.

Bossi & Ich Ky is located at 112 First Ave. S., Seattle. Call 206-749-2830 or visit www.bossiandichky.com for more information.

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