

DIVERSIONS



Not so extreme makeover

Sometimes you have to give kudos to someone for just being plain nice. On May 16, Alberta Street businesses pampered, primped and otherwise transformed two women just because they wanted to. Sure, it doesn't hurt business to sponsor a makeover contest, but Mitch Bridon, the gay owner of the lushly décored Spank! Salon at Northeast 14th and Alberta, didn't really do much advertising or other such horn tooting for Spanking Portland. He just passed out some fliers, told this newspaper and let his clients know.

"I wanted to see if the street would go for it...come together and participate with each other. And they did," Bridon told me last March. It was a way for the new Portland business owner to connect with his neighbors and with some deserving citizens, who were required to submit an essay saying why they needed their own local *Queer Eye* day so very badly.

Bridon trained as a stylist in Michigan, where he grew up, before traveling to Scotland and England to study at Vidal Sassoon and Rita Rusk. "The training was absolutely incredible and so much more artistic than anything I had been exposed to in the USA," says Bridon, who originally moved to Portland years ago. His business partner's kids had moved here and "always communicated how unbelievable Portland was." Although he'd never been here, he "wanted a change" and "packed up my townhouse and came sight unseen. I fell in love with it."

He had to move back to Michigan because of family issues and stayed five years. But then early last year "I was in a parking lot at a Wal-Mart in the middle of nowhere in Nebraska when I received a phone call from a friend sitting at Tin Shed restaurant saying they were staring across the street at the place that was going to be my hair salon/art gallery," Bridon smiles. "Two weeks later I was signing the lease."

For his Spanking Portland brainchild, Bridon and other representatives from area businesses chose three winners—one of whom hasn't yet received the royal treatment. Judging from the other two, she's in for quite a day.

Following an orange-juice-and-champagne-soaked consultation, Bridon and Spank! stylist Mark Hunsaker colored and cut their way through Spanking Portland winners Dayna Schoessler and Marcia Strickland. A makeup artist touched them up, then the whole gang went down the street to Frock, where the winning pair jazzed up their couture. Bridon ordered dinner, got some wine, turned up the tunes and joined the Frock staff in saying "yea or nay" to every outfit.

Frock comes complete with a little runway, and a photographer was on hand to snap away. "It was silly," laughs Schoessler, "it was so much fun."

Schoessler, 35, who hails from Northeast Portland, as do the other winners, entered the contest because she "kind of had been feeling like I'm aging," she says. "I don't want to be like an old person who wears too tight of clothes, you know?" (I know.)

Before exiting Alberta Street, the women received many reasons in the form of gift certificates from restaurants, a fitness club, a massage therapist and others to come back.

They both went out after their makeovers to show themselves off. Strickland went to a bar with a friend, who was, she says, "amazed. She was impressed by the transformation."

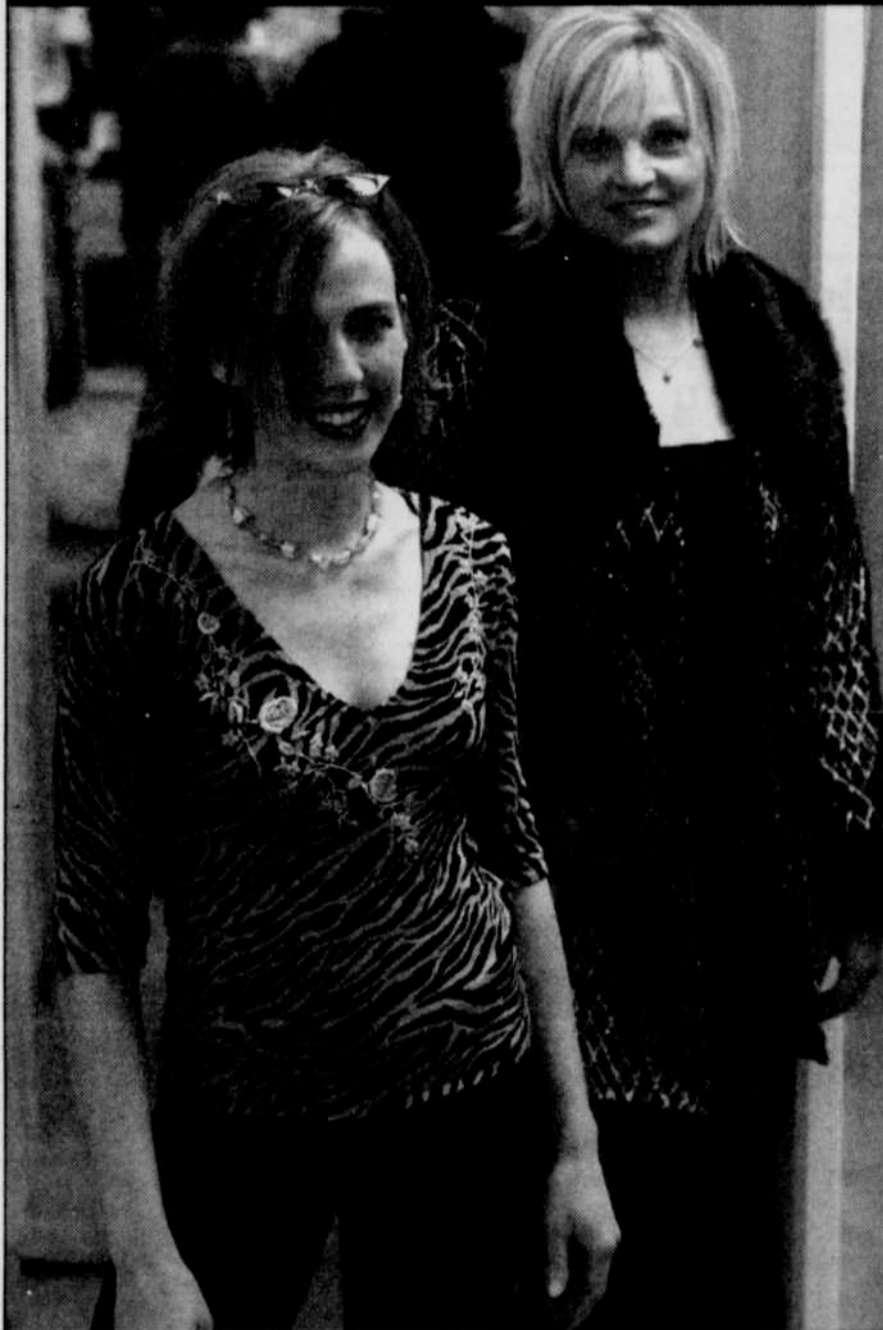
Bridon is beaming. "I was thrilled with the results," he says. "They were hot.... If they didn't turn a bunch of heads, I don't know what would."

Bridon also notes that the day was relaxing, not too over the top. Very Portland. "We were laughing because you talk about *The Swan* and all that stuff, and it was weird how different we made these two people look without having to do nip and tuck and suck fat out." He pauses and laughs. "We did something to them, and it didn't have to hurt!"

And, Spank! did something it didn't have to. And that doesn't hurt. []



Marcia Strickland and Dayna Schoessler before their makeovers on Alberta Street (above) and after (below)



1,000 reasons to start gardening

Not that you necessarily need a good reason to drive out to the beautiful ode to nature that is Sauvie Island, but May 22 and 23 gay-owned Cistus Design Nursery, 22711 N.W. Gillihan Road, plays host to the 1000 Friends of Oregon annual plant sale, a benefit event for the nonprofit conservation organization.

Cistus is owned by Sean Hogan and Parker Sanderson, who call their nursery a "home for zonal denial." In other words, you can find non-Oregon plants that will nonetheless thrive in Northwest gardens.

Their international inclinations don't preclude the couple



Spend a day with chicks and gay guys on Sauvie Island for the 1000 Friends of Oregon annual plant sale

from providing the site for this very Oregon-based event. 1000 Friends is dedicated to protecting Oregon's farm and forest lands and promoting sustainable cities. A range of notable Oregon nurseries have donated plants for the sale.

Joining in the garden gala are artists from Cracked Pots, another nonprofit that turns junk into art. Cracked Pots artists will be selling their wares, including garden furniture and art made from reclaimed and recycled materials.

Once you've loaded up on plants, art and nature sights, you can continue your gay gardening day by stopping in at gay-owned Joy Creek Nursery, 20300 N.W. Watson Road, in nearby Scappoose. Joy Creek is hosting a weekend "Celebration of Clematis" (which sounds like a lesbian love-in but is actually a lovely flowering vine).

For more information and directions, visit www.cistus.com or www.joycreek.com.

Lesbians loving the land

Calling all metro lesbos: You don't know what you're missing! From May 28 to 30, learn how to garden, prune and even chop wood during A Weekend at Home at Oregon Women's Land Farm in Days Creek.

OWL is launching what it hopes will become a yearly event, during which women from all over Oregon are invited to spend a weekend camping out and experiencing the unique setting.

"We want to have an awakening," says Cory Milecar, who lives on the property with her partner, Rae, and their 9-month-old baby girl. "Most women's lands are coming up on their 30th birthdays." She hopes to spark a new awareness of the history and importance of women-only natural enclaves.

"There is a need to get back to the land," says Milecar, who promises that women will have the opportunity to "get their hands in the dirt," both literally and metaphorically. "Women find their grounding a lot of times with the land," she notes.

The Milecars would love to see more residents at OWL Farm. A several-tiered screening process includes living on the land for increasing increments of time. A Weekend at Home could serve as an introduction for some women considering a longer stay.

A welcome circle and bonfire will start the weekend off Friday evening. The next day will include a nature walk, entertainment and plenty of time to explore and relax. Some housing is available for those unable to camp.

To make reservations, call the farm at 541-643-2565.

Trans play wins Pulitzer, earns Tony nominations

Am My Own Wife, a Broadway drama about famous transgender German Charlotte von Mahlsdorf, not only won the Pulitzer Prize for drama last month but has been nominated for three Tony Awards, including Best Play, Best Direction and Best Actor.

Gay playwright Doug Wright (who also wrote *Quills*) put his obsession with Mahlsdorf to paper and

adapted the name of the show from her autobiography *I Am My Own Woman*, a fascinating look into turbulent 20th century Berlin and Mahlsdorf's survival of the Nazi regime.

The well-deserved darling of New York's play season has also won nearly a dozen other drama and critics awards.

Other particularly queer Tony nominations include *Avenue Q* (which stars gay puppets, no less) with six, including Best Musical, Best Direction and Best Actress; *The Boy from Oz*, which stars Hugh Jackman (who we're still waiting to hear from in the "is he gay" category) as entertainer Peter Allen, who died of AIDS; and the Rosie O'Donnell-produced *Taboo*, which earned four nominations, including Best Actor for Boy George, who portrayed queer performance artist Leigh Bowery.

The 58th annual Tony Awards air at 8 p.m. June 6 on CBS. []



Jefferson Mays plays more than 40 characters in the Broadway hit *I Am My Own Wife*