

NORTHWEST news

QUEEN BEE CREATIONS BUZZES WITH ACTIVITY

Portland design company launches new line and spring collection

by Rebecca Ragain

A tour of the Queen Bee Creations' work studio stimulates the senses. Also known as "the Hive," the space is permeated by the smell of vinyl. Scraps of colorful fabric and shiny rivets catch the eye. Occasionally a train whistles outside, interrupting the gentle stutter of sewing machines.

The Hive is the center of queer artist Rebecca Percy's growing business of creating hand-made bags, purses and wallets. This is no fledgling concern. In business since 1996, Queen Bee has grown to employ seven people, including Percy. Redd Moon, Percy's business partner, estimates that every week Queen Bee workers produce an average of 500 items.

What makes this count impressive is that every one of these 500 accessories is hand-crafted. Percy personally designs everything. The vinyl pieces are assembled, glued, sewn and finished, all within the rooms of the Hive. From design to order fulfillment, only one part of the process is outsourced, and that task goes to another Portland company.

Percy has no plans to take any part of the Queen Bee production process overseas. She has a strong commitment to community and takes pride in the fact that everything is made right here in Portland.

"We try to do as much as we can in Portland, locally," says Percy, "to support other businesses and also just not to use more energy and fuels than necessary. It's so rare that you get to come into a place like this and actually buy something from the people who made it. To me that's crucial, because there's a huge dis-



Kim Sakkara (left) and Rebecca Percy work in Queen Bee's central eastside studio.

loyal Queen Bee customers are reaching this point in life right along with her, and she hopes that this built-in customer base will give the new line a slow but steady start.

The story of Chickpea's origination is a perfect example of Percy's method of operation: She sees a need, then fills it with one of her designs. It's the same way that Queen Bee Creations first started, with the design of the Wonder Wallet. Percy needed a checkbook-sized wallet for herself, so she bought some vinyl and made one.

"My natural tendency is if I need something, to make it myself and not actually go out and buy it. It's part of what I enjoy doing in life. From age 13 on up, I made my own clothes and sewed like crazy and loved doing it," says Percy.

"I love the expression of what it is for us to dress ourselves and to decorate ourselves. That's what's interesting to me," she adds.

For more information about QUEEN BEE CREATIONS visit www.queenbee-creations.com.

REBECCA RAGAIN is a Portland free-lance writer.

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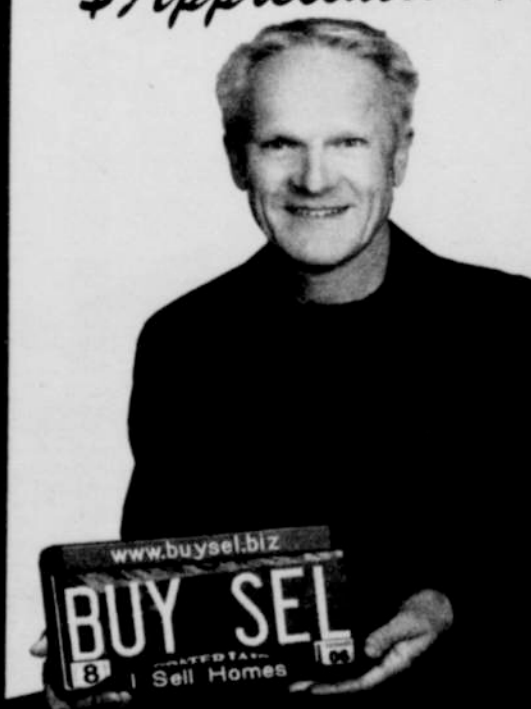
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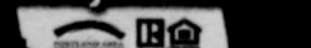
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