

Funderwear

Indie drawers from a local BY ADRIENNE VAN DER VALK

Ashley Hoffman always wanted to sell her original clothing designs, but she knew that to be successful, she needed to find her niche. She never imagined she'd find it peddling undies on Etsy.

"I started screen printing onto T-shirts," she recalls. "But it's pretty common; everyone does that. So I kept making different things and putting them on there. I always wanted to try making underwear. When I got brave enough to try, it got a really good response."

The response came from a network of shopping enthusiasts who flock to Etsy's homespun-chic web site in search of fun, original items sold directly by the artists themselves. Gorgeous photography, hip layouts and funky screen names (Hoffman's is "bullfight") have catapulted Etsy to uber-popularity since it launched three years ago, providing crafters all over the world access to a virtual open air market. For Hoffman and her fashions, it's a perfect fit.

"I've had quite a few repeat customers," she says of her underwear line, a collection of handmade panties made from recycled T-shirts. "I think that is

a testament to the fact that they're comfortable, cute and one-of-a-kind."

A peek at Hoffman's Etsy page reveals a rainbow of striped panties, somewhat reminiscent of Underoos. She also offers funky hand-sewn screen printed hoodies, notecards, decorative onesies for babies and, for the truly eccentric shopper, a collection of moustache stickers. She recently began sewing full-time and plans to expand her line.

"I got laid off from my job," she explains. "I found that to be a really good opportunity to try crafting for a living. It's a scary thing to try, but if you find yourself without a job then it's not so scary. I've gotten a lot requests for men's underwear, and I'm going to do plus size. There's some demand for

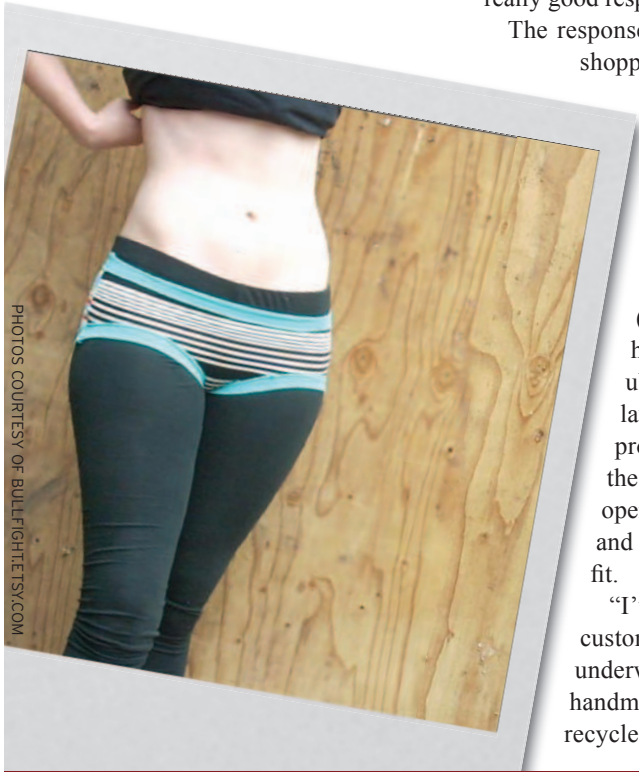
children's, too."

Hoffman acknowledges that her soft cotton skivvies with their thick ribbing are not designed to go under slinky dresses or tight dress pants. Their cuteness and comfort quotients, however, are beyond compare, and at \$10 they're priced to wear.

"If you're going to walk around the house and cook breakfast in your underwear," she says, "then this is the pair for you!"

EW

Ashley Hoffman's designs are available at bullfight.etsy.com



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