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Behind the scenes at Bootypop

The Boston Globe



Susan Bloomstone of Newton created Bootypop, a line of padded undergarments for women who want to augment their rear end without surgery. (Yoon S. Byun/Globe Staff)

By Kate M. Jackson Globe Correspondent / January 31, 2008 Email | Print | Text size - +



We all think, at one time or another, of changing careers. Not everyone imagines going into the underwear business.

Susan Bloomstone did, however. Bloomstone, a former television producer for PBS, got an idea for a business venture after reading a New York Times story in 2006 on the dramatic increase in buttock augmentation surgery.

"I read how more and more women were walking into their plastic surgeon's office and asking for a [rear end] like Beyoncé's," said Bloomstone, who lives in Newton. "The butt used to be something you hid, but now it's something you show off."

Of course it's not just the pop diva who's got the look. Pre-pregnancy, Jennifer Lopez always flaunted her hourglass shape, and actress Jessica Biel - Esquire's 2005 sexiest woman alive - is nothing but curves.

Suddenly, everywhere Bloomstone looked she saw women striving for, yep, a bigger booty. Celebrities were showcasing their perfectly shaped behinds on the red carpet instead of the usual cleavage. Director Pedro Almodóvar had Penélope Cruz beef up her posterior with a prosthetic rump in the film "Volver." On the ABC show "Brothers & Sisters," Calista Flockhart's character padded her bony behind to become more "bootylicious" to potential suitors.

Bloomstone saw a business opportunity. Her product? Bootypop, a line of padded underwear designed to help women look a bit more . . . voluptuous. Think of it as a padded bra, she says, for your backside.

Indeed, Bloomstone says the padded garments offer a desirable way to showcase your assets - one not nearly as pricey or risky (or permanent) as surgery.

"There's something fun about being able to change your silhouette the way you change your clothing," she said. "Women will be able to choose from a wider array of clothing styles, ones they may have stayed away from previously because of their body shapes."

It may not only be about trying different clothing. Choosing to change one's shape, temporarily or not, is about changing identities. "A lot of this has to do with the search for the exotic 'other,' the coveting of a body shape you don't have or couldn't possibly have," said Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber, director of the women studies program at Boston College and author of "Am I Thin Enough Yet?"

"Today, we're able to use the body as a fashion tool," she continued. "Body shapes, like clothing, can be trendy and driven by celebrity culture. Looks and body shapes come in and out of style."

Bloomstone officially launches Bootypop at celebrity fashion mecca Kitson in Los Angeles tomorrow. She says the padded undies, in colors with names like Cotton Candy, Sour Apple Candy, and Black Licorice, will eventually be sold at retail stores here, too. ■

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