

October 5, 2005



## MARA KUSTRA OF BOUTIQUE FABULOUS

Fun with fashion, brains, beauty and blood

Do you know a good veterinarian?  
Because my pythons are sick.

THE GOOD BOSTONIAN | BY DAVID WILDMAN | WILDMAN@WEEKLYDIG.COM

Back in the '90s, Mara Kustra was wowing the shit out of Wall Street as a day trader. Unlike her fellow Masters of the Universe-in-training, however, she wasn't dreaming of corporate mergers and mouth-watering stock options—she was contemplating escape. It wasn't long before she moved to Cambridge, became a waitress at the 1369 Coffee House, and then, following a lifelong dream, opened

up her own shop. During a recent interview (where she was approached after enjoying a meal of various animal brains and generous amounts of wine), it was quickly evident that Kustra had made the right decision. "I love it, I love my life, and I love going to work, although it doesn't even feel like working," she says, leaning across a table littered with cauliflower-like remains and

adding in a whisper: "My friends ordered the brains. I pretended to eat some, but I only tried one of them." Boutique Fabulous, Kustra's shop in Inman Square, is a seamless extension of her vivid personal style and offbeat, endearing charm. The store, which has been in the square for two years, is crowded with a rich array of clothing, furniture, jewelry, kitchenware and posters; she'll sell

basically anything she feels is up to her standards of quality. A space that might in lesser hands look like a rummage sale is instead eye-catching, yet welcoming enough to make a visitor feel immediately comfortable. Crystal chandeliers, jewelry and colorful pottery are balanced by off stacks of records, used clothing, tables of cards and other less upscale items. continues >> 16

"I'm spending most of my time being creative, trying to make my store unique," she says. "Everything that I look at—TV, magazines, restaurants—all of it goes into creating the feeling that people will have when they come into my store."

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She also uses her store to support local artists, stocking many original works of jewelry and other items by local designers and craftsmen. Kustra's interest in all things Inman led her to help initiate and become president of the Inman Square Business Association.

"The important thing is keeping the square independently owned," she says, explaining that a number of big chain stores have been trying to move into the rapidly gentrifying area. The business association has also been the force behind a series of outdoor festivals comprising all of Inman Square, where bands have played outdoors and shops have featured food, music and other various treats for passersby.

says. Some bashes have involved live musicians playing inside Boutique Fab, while scantily clad women in the huge storefront windows dance or act like mannequins that move unexpectedly to startle people walking by on the street.

For Halloween, Boutique Fabulous will join with ImprovBoston for a gory after-hours party, where Kustra anticipates there will be "a lot of blood all over, ketchup on the front windows. It's going to be gross." ☼

[Boutique Fabulous's Gorefest after-party will be on Friday, 10.28.05, 9:30pm-11pm. 1309 Cambridge St., Inman Sq., Cambridge. 617.864.0656. <http://boutiquefabulous.com>]

