

The Seattle Times Company

NWjobs | NWautos | NWhomes | NWsource | Free Classifieds | seattletimes.com



find your own SEATTLE

Wednesday, November 16, 2011

minding the store

Fashion icon Betsey Johnson meets her Seattle fans

By [Rebecca Garland](#)

[October 14, 2010](#)

Special to NWsource



Betsey Johnson met her fans at her Seattle store on Oct. 14, 2010.

[Betsey Johnson](#) is not your typical fashion designer. With an over 40-year career in fashion, this self-described “young 68 [year-old]” does cartwheels down the runway and rolls out whimsical fashions for the young and young-at-heart year after year. Betsey made [two appearances in Seattle this week](#) to meet her fans and raise money for breast cancer charities.

Following an event at the [Nordstrom flagship store](#) downtown on the evening of Oct. 13, Betsey appeared at the [Betsey Johnson store](#) the following day, beginning with a pre-party for invited guests. [The Atomic Bombshells](#) burlesque troupe danced in the window of the store, entertaining pre-party guests inside, as well as fans lined up along Fifth Avenue outside waiting for the party scheduled to open to the public at noon.

DJ Carla Schricker, “MC Queen Lucky,” played music ranging from the Go Go’s to Madonna. In keeping with the Betsey Johnson aesthetic (and matching the store’s hot pink decor), many guests wore dresses in an array of vibrant colors and bold prints paired with patterned tights, strappy heels and accessories from rhinestones adorned on their faces to feathered hair pieces. Some of Betsey’s youngest fans, little girls with their mothers, also dressed the part in tulle dresses and tutus.

Pre-party guests were given swag bags containing a Betsey Johnson cosmetic bag and lotion, Benefit Cosmetics mascara, Von Reuss eyeshadow, a Julep Nail Parlor one-day membership pass and nail polish in the obvious color: pink. Guests enjoyed [Trophy cupcakes](#) and mimosas provided by [Julep Nail Parlor](#), while a video of Betsey Johnson’s latest New York Fashion Week show played in the background.

Fans screamed and the music of Lady Gaga and Beyonce’s “Telephone” played as Betsey arrived at the store. She immediately

climbed into the front window to dance with The Atomic Bombshells. “Every other girl in Seattle secretly does burlesque. It’s a statistic I heard,” she joked as she first addressed the crowd.

Betsey was dressed in a pink-and-black striped long-sleeved dress with black open-toed heels and the words “New York” emblazoned across a brown leather belt at her hips. Despite her obvious allegiance to her New York home, Betsey lamented the differences between the two cities. “If we could only shorten the distance between Seattle and New York,” she told her guests. “New York should take a few hints from Seattle. New York would have a much better time and would be full of sweeter, nicer people.”

Following the pre-party, the nearly 100 fans outside the store were allowed inside to meet Betsey. True to form, she stayed at the party until all of her fans had the opportunity to meet her. Her effervescent personality was evident as she smiled and hugged many of her fans. Which is exactly how she greeted me when she graciously took time out of her party to answer a few questions.

Seattle’s Betsey Johnson store opened in its current location approximately 23 years ago. “We just felt something great about Seattle,” she said of the decision to open her 11th store here. “It’s a trippy little city. The littleness. The bigness. The hipness. The beauty.”

It wasn’t just the city itself that appealed to Betsey. Seattle’s hard-to-define style was also a draw. “I love Seattle fashion because I don’t know what it is. It’s very individualized and very New York to me in a great way, with the energy, the new and the old, the modern and the contemporary, the hip coolness of it.”

Unlike Seattle, Betsey does not have any trouble defining the style of her own designs, describing them as costume-like, born of her original desire to be a dancer. “I didn’t want to do normal, real

clothes,” she says. Betsey is quick to stress that it’s not the clothes themselves that are important. “It’s what we *do* with the clothes. Our customers really know how to work their clothes.”

Though she hadn't visited Seattle since she opened the store, Betsey enjoyed her time in our city. When she wasn't visiting with fans, she shopped at vintage stores and dined at Purple Cafe and Wine Bar. “Everybody, everything has been so great. Let’s add on five days to our trip.”

If you have a shop, sale, event or great product tip you'd like to share, e-mail seattleshopping@nwsourc.com or tell us on [Facebook](#). Follow us on [Twitter](#) for the latest local sales, great deals and noteworthy products, designers and stores.
Copyright © 2011 The Seattle Times Company