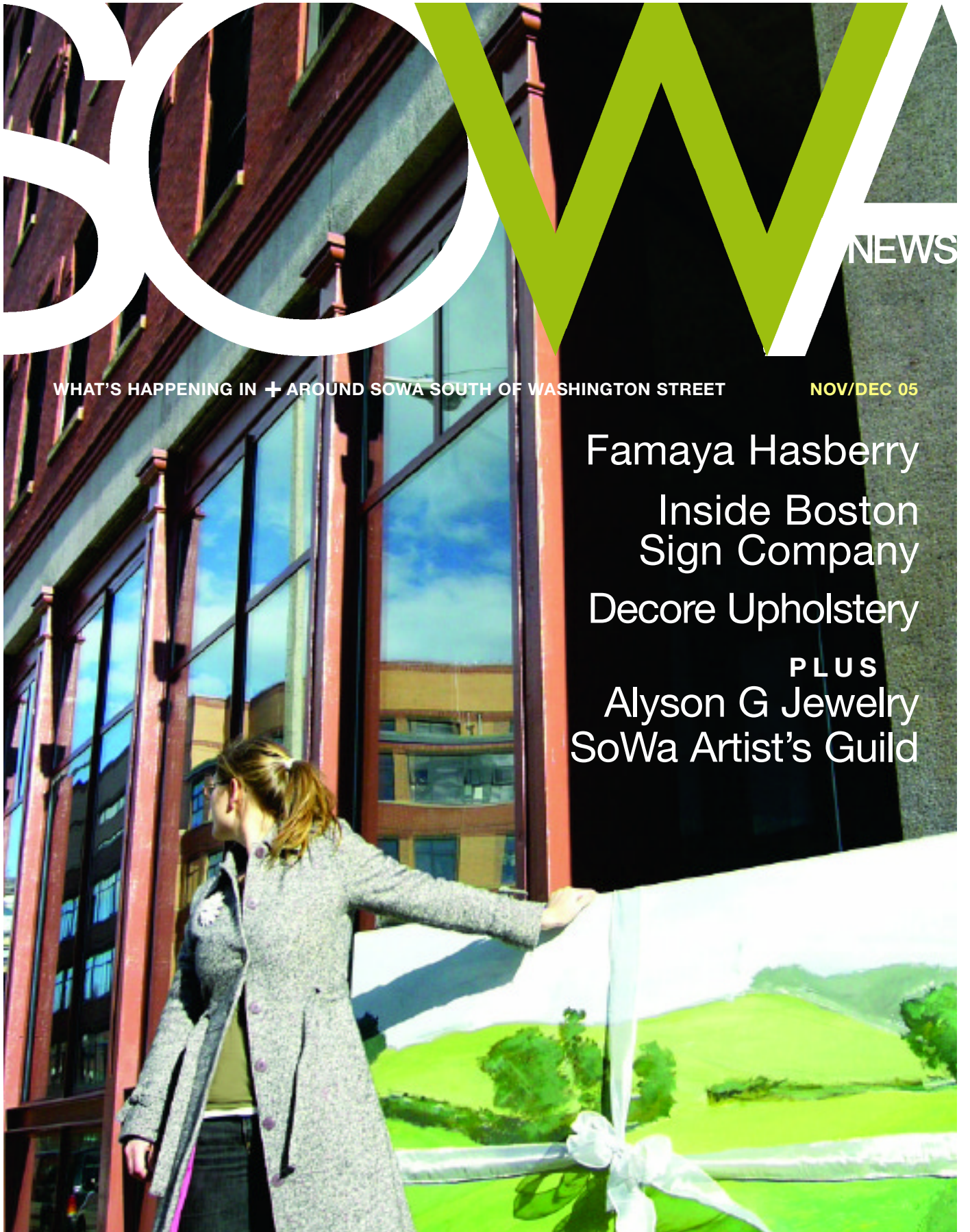


SO WA NEWS

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN + AROUND SOWA SOUTH OF WASHINGTON STREET

NOV/DEC 05

Famaya Hasberry
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PLUS
Alyson G Jewelry
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Signs of the Times

Boston Sign forges ahead with a nod to the past

Most businesses don't start on a skateboard. But that's how Bryn Robinson lined up his first clients way back in 1989. Fresh out of sign-painting and hand-lettering school, he went rolling up and down Newbury Street building up his clientele and getting a job here, a job there. Then he got busy enough that he graduated to an unheated garage in Newton.

About the same time, Ray Thill was selling printing and graphic arts after graduating from Lafayette College. Next thing you know Bryn's signs business had grown to the point where the schedule was a little crazy

and days not long enough...so Ray, with experience working in the construction and graphics arts trades, volunteered to help with the installations and computerization of Boston Sign. Not too long after that Bryn swore off his recording contract as a reggae DJ with Warner Brothers (no joke!)...and Ray kissed print quotes goodbye...and it's hello Boston Sign Company for the two of them.

After a few years getting established and renting bare-bones loft space here in the neighborhood, they



PHOTO BY ERIN DOWLING

Some of Bryn's work

bought 40 Plympton Street. That was way back in 1997 and today

they have a three-story sign-making operation going full bore with six full-time employees designing, fabricating, cutting, painting, carving and hanging every kind of sign you can think of.

We're not talking about artless chain store, strip mall commodity signage. Boston University, Emerson College and the Boston Celtics are not interested in cut-and-paste. Fabrication and installation takes experience and talent but the real meat on the bone comes with design and interpretation. These guys are very much in the business of expressing and broadcasting your ethos and élan for the public eye. They are your plastic surgeon, your Hollywood agent and your Deepak Chopra all rolled into one...uh, two. So whether it's custom air brush, art deco, aged patina or hand gold leafing, their patent is pure wizardry.

Indeed, these guys are now one of Boston's premier go-to teams for sign design. But it all started back when it was done by hand...and now that the lion's share of design is done electronically...it's important to make time for your roots. These days Bryn is using his hands to re-connect with his inner artist: going up to the elbows in clay and pottery...and pretty soon there'll be an unheated garage in the suburbs.

Boston Sign, 40 Plympton Street, (617) 338-2114.



PHOTO BY ERIN DOWLING

Ray Thill and Bryn Robinson

SHOPPING



Wrist Watch

Alyson G.'s new African-inspired bracelets are tops

Can you stand it? How beautiful are these? Alyson G. says they're inspired by West African fabric dyeing. We say she mugged a school of drifty, ethereal mermaids, or maybe mermen, and stole their booty.

Flower petals covered in dew, mer-creature bracelets,

glistening petits-fours... whatever your take, they're made of hand painted silk, semi-precious peridot, garnet, aquamarine...and loads of pearls.

Check her out at Studio 316B, 450 Harrison Avenue or on line at www.alysong.com.



PHOTO BY ERIN DOWLING

SOUTH END PROFILE Famaya Hasberry

The woman's got a plan. All of twenty-eight years old, Famaya Hasberry was doing a steady track. Born and raised in this town, she was a solid citizen: Married – Two Kids – Regular Job. It was pretty much all vanilla and no complaints. Then she got punched hard. Marlon, her husband and best guy of nine years' standing, passed away suddenly last spring.

Anyone who knows Famaya will tell you she's level headed and capable. But it takes a little more than that when you've been full-on blindsided. Thank God she has good family on both sides, loyal girlfriends, a lot of fellow workers at Boston University here on Harrison Avenue and, apparently, a good dose of determination somewhere deep inside.

And priorities get straightened out fast. The kids come first. But they're doing

fine and this article's about Famaya... so here's The Plan going forward:

LOSE WEIGHT. Famaya's lost forty-five pounds since February and isn't stopping. She's walking a lot, cutting down on portions, not even looking sideways at anything fried... and is tapping her foot waiting for Boston Sports Clubs to open up at 560 Harrison.

GET A DRIVER'S LICENSE. Yes, Famaya is a red-blooded American woman and, no, she hasn't felt the need for wheels. That was yesterday. Today she's got her certificate and she's fine on parallel parking and three-point turns...but reverse is A Grizzly Bear! Still working on that one.

GET BAPTIZED. It was one of those things she'd been wanting to do for a long time but just wasn't quite ready. Well, this

past August it happened. You could call it a born again kinda thing if you want.

BUY A HOME. Famaya, her mom and her sisters are going to get serious about owning a piece of property. They've got enough family between them to fill a big three-decker...and at today's prices it won't be such a stretch if they all go in on it together.

So that's The Plan. She's committed, she's serious...and it's happening. But save room for the fun, too. That's where "The Hen Party" comes in. Famaya and fourteen girlfriends meet once a month, pay dues, plan ahead and once a year they go on a big trip together. No sightseeing. Just hang out, shop, talk, dine, did I say "shop"? shop, stay up late, shop...this year it was New York. Next year maybe Miami. Call that one "Plan Number Two".

SewFabulous

Decore Upholstering ramps up

477 Harrison Avenue ... indisputably one of the best looking buildings anywhere in the SoWa neighborhood...has been home to Vincent ("Jimmy") Pergola's Decore Upholstering since 1979. In the surrounding galaxy of brand-new condominiums, police stations and health clubs, that makes Decore Upholstering one of our resident Grandes Dames of SoWa. Started by Jimmy's father in 1938 and now being continued by his son, Decore moved here from East Cambridge over twenty-five years ago and they expect to be here twenty-five years from now. To the trade only, Decore relocated here to be close to the 'Pike and the Expressway ... and also to the decorators' design center on Boylston Street. Well, the Design Center has moved to Southie but that still makes Decore's SoWa location a hop and a skip for decorators. Sell out to a condo developer and move again? Etes-vous wacko??

Whereas most of the big buildings around here were for pianos or shoes way back when, 477 Harrison was for horses. A big, fat, ornate brick stable owned by Jordan Marsh. And get this:



Decore's fabulous expanse at 477 Harrison

PHOTO BY ERIN DOWLING

five full floors of individual stalls, miles and miles of trough drains automatically washing the offal down to sewer level, straight-shot chutes where the dirty hay was hastened to wagons in the street ... but the best part was the ramp and the shower. A broad ramp for horses going up and down all five floors was fully clad with band after band of fire hose nailed to the boards for pony traction. No tripping! And a big, round ring of metal piping with heads...still attached to the ceiling today...was the horse shower.

First Floor Office and Showroom.
Second Floor Stitching, Cutting and Upholstering **Third Floor** Framing and Springing. **Fourth and Fifth Floor** Supplies and Storage. These guys don't

fool around: lumber comes in six-quarter, eight-quarter, twelve-quarter (1.5", 2" and 3"...get it?), jute webbing, coil springs and eight-way diamond ties. This is the berries. But don't even think of wandering in with your war-torn Hepplewhite. These guys are the pros and they only deal with the pros. It used to be easy: nobody but the decorators knew where to find them. Now that SoWa's getting to be "its own little city" Jimmy's got software designers strolling by out front, gallery-goers dreaming of lofts in his former stable...and even kids he invites in out of the rain, waiting for the school bus.

Decore Upholstering Company, Inc.
477 Harrison Avenue, (617) 542-1180.

SoWa Connection

SoWa Artists Guild knows the value of good PR

I.M. Pei and Frank Gehry are great architects. And the reason you and I know they're great architects is because they're even better businessmen than they are architects.

Maybe that's the raison d'etre for the brand new SoWa Artists Guild. Let's face it: 450 Harrison Avenue is home to a lot of exceptional artists but they can't all be experts at hosting, promoting, telling, mailing, blogging, networking...and generally getting the word out...that they are exceptional artists. But by combining their energy and time they have produced a marketing campaign, including a website (www.sowaartists.com) and are going to let everyone in this town know who they are, where they are and what they're doing.

Their goal is to connect with a broader public and to get them into the studios for an up-close appreciation of what's going on in SoWa and, as Guild founder Stephen Silver puts it, "to smell the paint".

They're not quite Cherokee Nation (yet) but there's strength in numbers so watch for the smoke signals!

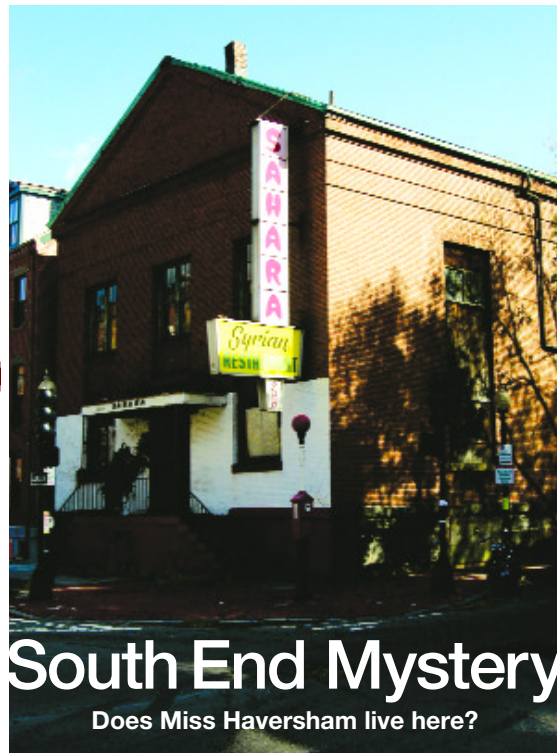


PHOTO BY ERIN DOWLING

South End Mystery

Does Miss Haversham live here?