

BOHO'S BOO BOO VERY CHIC

By DAVID LIVINGSTONE

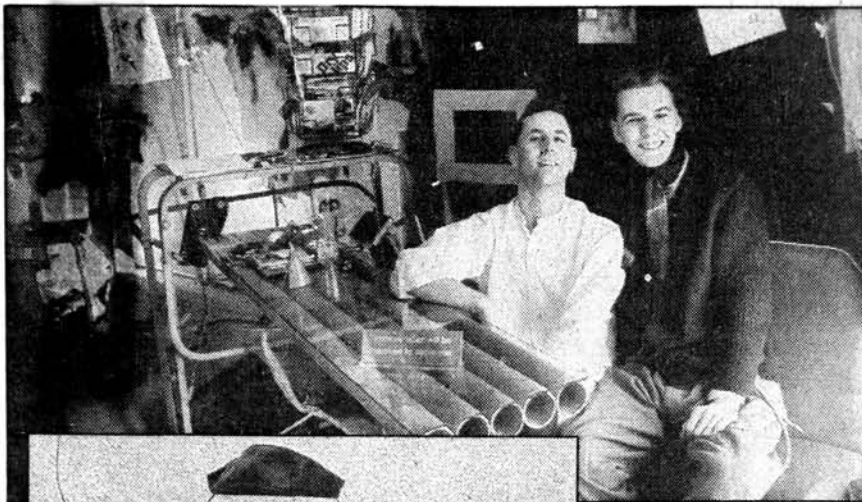
BOHO'S Boo Boo — though you might find the sarcastic, semiotic use of the dollar sign slightly *démodé*, it is hard, is it not, not to be tickled by the name? Boho'S Boo Boo is a boutique-cum-beauty parlor cum hole-in-the-wall gallery (if only in the sense that one can feel pleasure without feeling the need to shop) at 339 Queen Street W.

The store is, in its own sincerely negligent fashion, a shoppe, "chic," as Susan Hayward, in *Backstreet* put it. There are garments and accessories, some of which are wearable and all of which are for sale. But it is also akin to a sixties-style environment, a seventies-style installation, an eighties-style theme park. In this Disneyland with a difference, you won't find Mickey or Minny, with her endearingly oversized pumps, but a dead mouse, its grey, withered corpse laid to rest on cash, with a deuce for a blanket and a five-dollar bill to cushion its lifeless head.

Now, some people may have had it up to here with Queen Street parodies of commerce.

Reading dead French-Canadian poets is not new, nor is dressing in rags. Why it was only in 1978, over on Queen Street East, that one of the Viletones's girl friends was selling ripped, un-pretty clothing out of a store that was decorated in early-upheaval.

What exactly Boho'S Boo Boo has to do with fashion is, failing systems as precise as Roland Barthes's, not easy to decipher. And it doesn't help a whit that the three fellows who



JAMES LEWCUN

Jonas Goldstein and O. Struntz of Boho'S Boo Boo. At left, bi-cornered hat, \$15; leather neck piece, \$24, wool arm warmers, \$20, and buttoned skin poncho, \$70



now run the shop (there were more when it opened last October) are mistrustful of verbal articulation and prefer

to let a duffel coat turned into a tailcoat and trimmed with fur, torn shirts turned into tunics, and the dead mouse speak for themselves.

Ralph Roberts, born in 1956, has experience in making theatrical costumes and says he is anti-fashion, which makes it all the more puzzling that he should have taken so much trouble to fashion leather strips into a top that has the texture of chain mail and a price tag of \$750.

O. Struntz, born in 1955, has another name, a Viennese accent, a gold-capped tooth and a poetic intensity. He is responsible for the snakeskin cane, the tie-dyed scarves, and the souvenir Pietà on which the head of Christ's mother has been replaced with the head of a reptile and yet which pleads for pity. Jonas Goldstein, also born in 1955, went to art school in Indiana, wanted to be a midwife before he decided that that was a dead end, and has been a gay activist spokesman in Vancouver. He cuts hair, in the back of Boho'S Boo Boo's three rooms, where there is a chair and no sink; and in a second room, an exhibition space, sometimes appears in performance-art pieces. He's also the one who turns shirts into chemise dresses.

In their Pandorian emporium, the creations of these three mix with work, carried on consignment, by several others. The sales desk,

designed by Leo Slonetsky, is a table made from the frame of a roll-away cot, cardboard tubes, wires and glass. Of a more vestimentary nature are hats which are labelled *Dinny Did It* and include one honey of a little medieval pillbox crown for \$39. Bearing a *Clamdown* label are a pair of old flannel trousers gussied up with zipper-trimmed pockets and a belt of pinked leather. These cost \$45 and look good rolled up to *toreador* length. By way of jewelry, there are beaded necklaces and bracelets identified as representing the craft of Philly, "scum baby formerly of Toxic."

Queen Street regulars who may be familiar with Philly and what she used to get up to at her pioneering shop, Toxic, may see Boho'S Boo Boo as a continuation of that rough-and-tumble esthetic. Other folk may find that the shop makes them feel like they are growing old. Speaking personally, I find it to be a chaotic contrast to fashionable law and order, something similar to *respice*.

Be that as it may. For reasons having to do with time and money, Boho'S Boo Boo may close in mid-February. Meanwhile, the price on the graffiti-splattered fluorescent raincoat is being raised every day. It was \$19.98 on October 14; its value, duly recorded on cash register tape, is now up into the hundreds. I can't be sure what it all means, but, in my mind I hear the befeathered, crush-velveted ghost of Janis Joplin wailing, "Get it while you can."



Distressed sweater by Resa, \$78; chemise of plaid shirts, \$20, and belt of money, \$15, both by Jonas Goldstein