



Photos by Richelle Antipolo

UNIQUELY denton

Denton's "Best Stores" paint the town pink

Beth Klein is a self-described "treasure hunter" who haunts flea markets, junk shops and estate sales to create one-of-a-kind jewelry for her gift shop Sleeping Lizzards. Beth has a philosophy about her creations, which might use a vintage photograph or antique dice: "Jewelry is an expression," she says. "It's like wearing art on your body."

Everything in Sleeping Lizzards is unique, one of the reasons it took top honors last year in Texas' annual "Best Stores in Town" competition along with three other Denton shops – Recycled Books Records CDs, clothing store La Di Da and bead and jewelry boutique Bumble Beads (formerly Madison Jane). All of these stores are within walking distance of Denton's Downtown Square, which is thriving with shops, restaurants and clubs thanks to a two-decade-long effort – part of the Texas Main Street Program – to help businesses while preserving historic structures. Recycled Books, for instance, was an opera house in the 1800s and Sleeping Lizzards housed criminals a century ago.

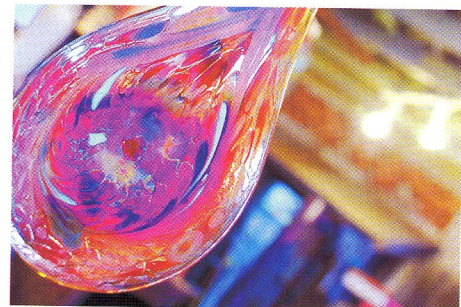
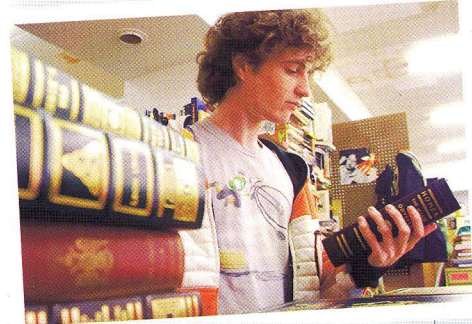
Beth picked up the space for Sleeping Lizzards in 1994 as a natural outgrowth of her wholesale crafts business. "Basically, we bought four crumbling brick walls," she says. There was no electricity, plumbing or parking lot. Now, shoppers who enter the pink-walled exterior find Beth's jewelry as well as sculptures, posters, furniture and apparel made locally. Her business partner, Roxane Clark, lures shoppers with wares from area artists – leather pouches in the shape of chickens or metal welded into animal shapes. The inspiration for the

name Sleeping Lizzards came from Beth's daughter, who kept poking passers-by with a foam lizard attached to a wand. Mommy decided to store the lizard. Her daughter's reply? "The lizard is sleeping, momma!" *The Denton Record-Chronicle* awarded it Best Specialty Shop in 2010.

Another "Best Stores" award winner is Recycled Books, located in the purple opera house opposite Denton's turn-of-the-century Courthouse. Recycled Books is 17,000 square feet of shelves filled end-to-end with literature – from Texas history to horror novels. It also boasts work by local musicians, including up-and-coming contemporary folk singer Sarah Jaffe and polka legends Brave Combo. Owner Don Foster gets a kick out of watching the mix of people in the store, particularly college students from the University of North Texas and Texas Woman's University. "It's always uplifting to see young people who are exploring unique areas, who aren't happy with John Grisham and the like."

South of Recycled Books is the ladies' fashion boutique La Di Da, offering brand-name apparel, footwear and accessories for women, including TOMS, Reef and True Religion. Shoppers who like a more DIY approach to their wearable art might pay a visit to Bumble Beads, south of the Square. Near the door, stop to marvel at vintage European art and asymmetrical crosses adorned with colored stones. The store's beading classes are great for birthday parties or a girls' night out.

What Beth likes about being in the city's historic center is that it attracts shoppers – out-of-towners as well as locals – looking for



the unusual. "You've got people that don't want vanilla," says Beth, surrounded by her one-of-a-kind baubles at Sleeping Lizzards. "They don't want to look like everybody else." ■

"BEST STORES" NAMED BY SHOPACROSSTEXAS.COM

RECYCLED BOOKS RECORDS CDS

200 N. Locust St. (940) 566-5688

SLEEPING LIZZARDS

424 N. Elm St. (940) 484-4056

LA DI DA

114 N. Locust St. (940) 442-6888

BUMBLE BEADS

105 W. Hickory St. (940) 380-1040