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Young women's love of vintage styles fills Dottie Rose

By James Edward Mills
For the State Journal

A young woman has old ideas on the latest in modern fashion. Melissa Ernst, owner of Dottie Rose Vintage, 1835 Parmenter St. in Middleton, takes notions of classic clothing and houseware items to put a new spin on contemporary statements of style.

"That 's kind of our specialty, higher end vintage clothing from a lot of different labels," Ernst said. "And then everything else in the store is vintage furniture. We do everything from the '30s to the '80s."

At 19 years of age, Ernst is younger than most anything you 'll find in her store. But a love of period fashion, relics of the not-so-distant past and a flair for merchandising compelled her to open the shop.

"If you go into a store today, you see stuff that 's just like this but tweaked just a little even though it 's new," Ernst said. "I like to show people that things from the past are exactly what we have around today. But now it 's something unique."

The name Dottie Rose is derived from both of Ernst 's grandmothers.

"They were really a big influence to me, especially my grandmother Rose," Ernst said. "She was a real fashion maven when she was younger. Whenever I see her in pictures I say, Gosh, I wish she 'd saved her clothes."

Now she collects them. Ernst painstakingly researches trends of the past, looking for just the right pieces. Everything is hand picked but not just for nostalgic value. She looks for things that have defied the passage of time and are still in vogue.

A trendy dress from 20 years ago by designer Diane Von Furstenberg is dramatically similar to styles she produces today. Geometric shapes cast in colors of brown and gold were popular then and now are back.

The French designer known as Lanvin, whose haute couture clothing first walked the runways of Paris in 1965, still offers apparel that is perpetual in its appeal. It 's a look that lasts.

"I 've always had a passion for vintage and how the old fashions are classics," Ernst said. "You can wear them now even though they 're 30 or 40 years old. I want to show that the new clothing is getting everything from the old and everything old is new again."

At Dottie Rose the same is true for classic housewares and furniture. A lime green Formica table in mint condition reminds you of the breakfast nook you knew as a kid. Its chrome-plated base and legs still shine like new. Set with similarly gleaming chrome-legged black vinyl chairs of the same period, you can 't help but think "how cool."



Retro fashions, like this fuchsia dress, are featured at Dottie Rose in Middleton.

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Ernst said she 's stocked up on cocktail glasses and martini shakers fit for the Rat Pack. Stainless steel must have been the thing back then because she also has a teapot cozy cast in silvery metal snugly wrapped around a ceramic carafe short and stout.

You will find a few new items in stock at Dottie Rose. Two lines of jeans, the moderately priced See Through Soul and the higher end Geography Denim, are quite popular among the thin and fashionable set. A line of T-shirts by Poketo sports the original designs of international artists.

Middleton jewelry designer Kelsey Welsh and Chicago designer Cyndi Chan offer a collection of new ready-to-wear jackets, shirts and dresses called Ori 'En. The style is reminiscent of fashions that were popular more than 30 years ago.

It 's items like these Ernst said that appeal to her customers who are looking for something different.

"You 're going to find things that are one of a kind that you 're going to want to wear or want to have in your house," Ernst said, "because no one else will have it."

Dottie Rose Vintage

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