



Jessica deGuardiola
and John Stewart
of Studio Five.

SHOPPING

A Room of One's Own

A warm welcome, please, to the city's first legit (and much-needed) fashion showroom.

Boston's fashion world has long had one item heading up its wish list: a bona fide place to spotlight local design talent. Well, check that one off, thanks to the opening of PR gal Jessica deGuardiola's Studio Five, a 1,400-square-foot spot in the South End. While deGuardiola had the publicity side covered from the get-go, she knew she needed help designing a hip, inviting space where both stylists and buyers could get a first look at up-and-coming designers' work.

Enter John Stewart, Studio Five's visual director and showroom manager, whose 11 years of experience in corporate fashion merchandising fit the bill perfectly.

The pair started working together nearly six months ago to develop something different from the typically fusty studio showrooms in other cities. "A lot of the New York studios are really modern," says Stewart. "You go in and it's just straight lines, a minimalist style." DeGuardiola

agrees: "What I want to avoid here is stiffness and coldness," she says. In New York, "you're with fashion experts who make you feel like the biggest dweeb.

This needs to be a comfortable place where you want to spend time."

Stewart's self-professed preppy style complements deGuardiola's eclectic, boho-posh tendencies—but both admit the process wasn't all sunshine and rainbows. "[Stewart] would create a display and I wouldn't like it," says deGuardiola. "But once we homed in on what, exactly, we were going for, it was easy."

The result is an immaculate but funky nook that's perfect for showing off clothing and accessories. Antique, velvet-lined suitcases display necklaces and brooches; ghost chairs and chandeliers from Party by Design add modern zing; and a zebra-hide rug lends a touch of boudoir-style decadence. Featured local designers include Nirva Derbekyan, Sam Mendoza, David Chum, and Emily Muller.

The studio isn't open to the public, but fashion fans can still get a taste during monthly invite-only trunk shows—this month California cashmere designer C. Z. Falconer swings through. Meanwhile, the trunk-show-averse should still be making space in their closets—after all, Studio Five's raison d'être is to get more Boston designs into shops throughout the city and beyond.

—ANNE VICKMAN