

LOOK

When beauty is a destination

Funky new hair salons aim to offer green choices, high-end feel

JENNIFER FONG EDMONTON

Imagine this: it's Friday night and you're kicking back with a glass of Shiraz with your closest gal pals. The morning after your night out, you grab a coffee and settle down with a good book.

Neither occasion brings you anywhere near a wine bar, nor a library. Nope — just hanging out at your local hair salon is all.

In the next few weeks, two new hair salons will open in Edmonton: one on Whyte Avenue, and the other smack in the heart of downtown's chic warehouse district. In both busy markets, longstanding competitors are situated mere blocks away.

But the owners of the Beauty Parlour (10011 82nd Ave.) and [Blunt Salon \(10142 104th St.\)](#) aren't worried. Their salons won't just be salons — they'll be destinations.

Opening Saturday in Old Strathcona, the Beauty Parlour's hook begins from the ground up. Owner-hairstylist Desirée Liley commissioned former hairdresser Bryan Humphrey (owner and creative director of modern furniture store 29 Armstrong) to design an environmentally friendly six-station salon above Top Gear, a scooter shop, and its in-store cafe Luzzara Bar, both co-owned by her husband Dylan Liley.

"We just wanted to offer a department-store type of feeling. Get your hair done; get your bike fixed," Desirée Liley explains.

At first glance, bikes and hair seems an unlikely mix, but Liley says the green theme is a potent link.

"When you get into people who purchase Vespas, that's when you get environmentally aware people who are interested in style. ... They want to make a difference and they want to look cool doing it."

And what better way to look cool than with a great guilt-free do?

When the salon opens, Liley, who has eight years of hairdressing experience behind her, will be working only with eco-conscious hair products made with natural and organic ingredients. Shampoos and conditioners by John Masters Organics and Surface Hair are all paraben-free and contain no artificial colours or fragrances, while colour lines Natrique and Voila are ammonia-free.

That's just the beginning. The salon's water heater is solar-powered and Humphrey has constructed the Beauty Parlour almost entirely from locally sourced, salvaged material. The wood flooring and wall panels that give the space a rich, lived-in look were reclaimed from a defunct grain elevator in Innisfail, he says, while the retro hydraulic salon chairs and sit-down blowdryers either came second-hand or from the market.

CHRIS SCHWARZ
THE JOURNAL
SUPPLIED SUPPLIED
GREG SOUTHAM,
THE JOURNAL
SUPPLIED
hen beauty
destination



Bryan Humphrey has helped design and build *The Beauty Parlour*, a new eco-friendly salon owned by Desirée Liley that's set to open Saturday. It will specialize in low-to nonchemical product lines and is constructed of almost entirely sustainable, locally salvaged materials. [John Chong](#) recently won a [Contessa Award for Multicultural Hairstylist of the Year](#) for his skill in working with nonCaucasian hair. Chong is working temporarily out of the [Martino salon](#) on 124th Street.

market.

"We're upgrading it and giving a modern spin to it," says Humphrey.

Eventually, Liley plans to install a rooftop garden, and hold seminars to teach people easy ways to live green. A mini-library will house books about combating climate change.

"This is going to be a shiny beacon of environmental design," says Humphrey, and clients are going to come to bask in a little bit of that light. "You come here for the experience."

Across the river, Blunt Salon is pushing another kind of shiny: that of the bright, flashy, and new. Opening April in the recently erected Icon tower on 104th Street at Jasper Avenue, Blunt is modelled after boutique salons seen in New York and Los Angeles.

John Chong and Rob Gaspar, both hairdressers formerly of the Ricci Hair Co., have imagined a hip, trendy space that will feature its own cappuccino bar alongside 14 styling stations and a front-and-centre colour bar, where stylists will mix dyes as if they're mixing drinks.

"We wanted to create a funkier salon, a little bit more high-end without going too, too crazy in terms of prices," says Gaspar.

The big draw, Gaspar and Chong hope, will be their "Friday Night Blowouts," catered to women who want to get dolled up before a special night on the town. From 7 p.m. to 11 p.m., Blunt will be open for blowdrys and makeup touchups. The service will be priced at about \$40 to \$60 per person and will include a complimentary glass of wine.

The blowouts will give the salon a raison d'être beyond being just a place to go to get your split ends chopped off every three months.

"Back in the day, you go get your hair done," explains Gaspar, who envisions clients prepping at Blunt before heading across the street for tapas at Tzin or dinner at Sabor Divino. "After work, you're done at five, instead of rushing home, you come to us and get everything taken care of."

If all that glitz and glamour isn't enough of a draw, Gaspar, 31, and Chong, 48, boast impressive resumes. Between them, they share 33 years of styling experience, a Mirror Award (2002 Alberta Salon Team of the Year), and a Contessa Award (2009 Multicultural Hairstylist of the Year for Chong).

"You need to separate yourself and diversify in downtown Edmonton," Gaspar says. "You have to be the best of the best or you just won't make it."