

Above the Belt

How a Brookline designer is taking the accessory to new lengths. By Margit Feury

"When you walk into a room," says Hadley Pollet, "your look should say, 'Ta-da!'" And for Pollet, the 32-year-old Brookline-based hot designer, that impact all comes down to your accessories. Or, rather, her accessories. Pollet's funky, original belt designs gained steam last winter as local favorites and have since been snapped up all across the country, landing on the counters of such top-notch retailers as Bergdorf Goodman in New York and Fred Segal in L.A.

Pollet's surprise success began when she was working on an assignment for a fashion class at the Rhode Island School of Design. She walked into a fabric store, thinking she might add trim to the bottom of a skirt, and stumbled across some vintage ribbon. She bought a couple of yards of it and also happened to pick up a retro Bakelite buckle. Later that night, when getting dressed for a dinner out with friends, she wrapped the ribbon around her waist and fed it through the buckle. "Five people stopped and asked me where I got my belt," says Pollet. "I knew I had something."

She then expanded the design, pairing oriental ribbon with starlet closures, preppy ribbon with rebel buckles, and flirty flowers with offbeat clasps. She also made the belts reversible, so they could be worn on both sides.

One afternoon Pollet walked into Wish, the trendy boutique on Charles Street, wearing one of her belts. The "ta-da" factor worked: The shop agreed to sell the belts, and the first order of a dozen sold out in a week. Her belts are now in more than 50 stores across the country.

Pollet isn't stopping at the waistline. Look soon for her reversible handbags and maybe even reversible shoes. "This way every piece is two-for-one," she says. And, of course, has twice the "ta-da."

BUCKLING DOWN: Designer Hadley Pollet is now hard at work on reversible handbags.

