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## ASU alumna makes handbags with heart

By [Alexa D'Angelo](http://www.statepress.com/author/camayak_111/) (http://www.statepress.com/author/camayak\_111/)

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Jennifer Boonlorn and her company Soul Carrier. Photo by Luu Nguyen

There are dozens of handbags in tidy lines, organized by type, sitting on the floor in what would be a guest room in the home.

On the wall next to the door, there are packaging materials.

In the cabinet in the room is an embossing machine, pens, tissue paper, scissors and tape.

ASU alumna Jennifer Boonlorn sits on the small, white sofa in the room when an order comes in.

She takes the handbag and personally packages it, putting a handwritten thank-you note in alongside the bag.

She uses red spray paint and a cutout of her logo to decorate the box. It reads "Soul Carrier."

Boonlorn believes that a handbag can be more than a place to hold objects. She believes that her brand is an extension of one's soul. She created Soul Carrier based on one simple idea: truth.

"I want it to be about being truthful to yourself and finding your own truth," Boonlorn says.

Boonlorn graduated ASU in 2001 with a degree in business. While in college, she lost both her parents in a fatal car crash, which she and her younger sister witnessed. The car crash came from a flaw in the car, resulting in a settlement from the car company.

"It changed my life," Boonlorn says. "It opened different doors. I could have used the settlement money to buy dozens of Porsches, but I put it into this business to fuel my passion instead."

Before her parents' death, Boonlorn says she was going to go to law school and become a lawyer to fulfill her father's dream.

"As much as I wanted to be able to do that to honor my dad, I had to realize I wasn't honoring

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Boonlorn and her room of bags. Photo by Luu Nguyen.

myself and what I truly wanted in life," she says.

After graduating ASU, Boonlorn went to Mesa Community College to look into its fashion and design program because, as she says, she was always interested in design.

"At MCC, I felt that I was really getting back to my true passions," Boonlorn says.

With the school, Boonlorn says she went on a trip to New York for one week in the summer that solidified her decision to be in the fashion and design world.

She applied to Parsons The New School Of Design in 2006 for its two-year design program. In that time, Boonlorn lived in New York and had internships at Oscar de la Renta, Women's Wear Daily, American Eagle and Aeropostale.

"I loved all of it, but I started to want to do my own thing," Boonlorn says.

She began to make headbands in her free time.

"They were very Blair-Waldorf-inspired, preppy headbands," she says.

Her line of headbands went on to be picked up at stores on the famed Fifth Avenue in New York.

"After seeing my headbands in the window on Fifth Avenue, I kind of decided I was done with New York," Boonlorn says. "The city was great, but I wanted to go back home where I could drive a car and not be in the catty New York fashion industry."

She then moved back to Arizona, where she was working for a marketing company that was organizing a design event in which businesses were decorating mannequins and displaying them. Boonlorn created a mannequin that would go on to spark her idea for Soul Carrier.

"I made a mannequin out of this rug material," Boonlorn says. "And it sparked something in me and I wanted to make bags out of the material."

The inspired mannequin produced her business idea and now sits on the second floor of her home.

Boonlorn says she made prototypes of the rug bags and when she realized she had a burgeoning business on her hands she and a friend began brainstorming name ideas.

"My friend suggested 'carrier' and I was like well what about 'soul carrier'?" Boonlorn says. "I've always loved this idea of the soul and what it means and about finding inner truth, so it was the perfect name."

She then started producing and selling more of her rug bags and says she loved it. But the material wasn't very durable.

"I was ready to move on to the next thing," Boonlorn says. "That's when I wanted to use leather and create a more sleek design."

"For me, this collection is really about honoring authenticity and truth," she says.

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She sends her designs to her production team in Leon, Mexico where they make the bags and the prototypes to send back to Arizona.

Gabriella Lion, a current Soul Carrier intern and urban and metropolitan studies senior says she enjoys working with Boonlorn in the “laid-back” atmosphere.

“What we are really focusing on right now is getting her name out there and get the bags into stores,” Lion says.

Boonlorn says she likes to have ASU interns of all different kinds, including film and photography senior Dreyton Vang, who does a lot of behind the scenes work on photo shoots and film projects for the brand.

“It’s been very eventful and very bright and colorful,” Vang says. “Jennifer is making her vision come true, she is kind of a visionary in that sense.”

Soul Carrier is starting to take off as a current line of handbags and is available online. Boonlorn is in talks to get the line into bigger stores and boutiques in the area.

The bags are a sleek, modern design made with brown leather splashed with accents of color. They can be purchased at <http://www.soulcarrier.com>.

“I love that my fingerprints are on every stage of Soul Carrier, from initial design to sending out the bags,” Boonlorn says. “I feel a lot of momentum in the company and am truly blessed because I get to choose to do this every day.”

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