

# Phoenix designer will release new line of leather handbags after successful Kickstarter



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(Photo: Photo by Ty Schmitt)

In just over two days, Jennifer Boonlorn successfully funded the \$10,000 needed for her Kickstarter campaign.

Now nearly a month later, the Phoenix fashion designer is at nearly \$19,000, giving her plenty to work with as she releases the new collection for her Soul Carrier handbag brand. At the conclusion of the campaign on July 16, Boonlorn will send out leather and cowhide handbags to many of the campaign backers from her new line called Conscious Intentions, which features five styles.

At her father's encouragement, the 36-year old designer had intended to become a lawyer while she was attending Arizona State University. Then in 2000, tragedy struck: her parents were killed in a car crash. She soon realized after graduating from college, that she needed to follow her heart and pursue something she was passionate about.

"When my dad came to the U.S. from Thailand, he got his masters and became an architect, and took all of the tests but struggled with one," she said. "But he never gave up...Even after the car accident, it wasn't easy to keep going but I knew I had to make (my parents) proud, and not let myself fall apart. I could have easily been taken that day but I'm still here to do something."

Boonlorn had always been interested in fashion design, always admiring her mother's vast handbag collection and accumulating one of her own. She began taking fashion design courses at Mesa Community College, and a class trip to New York City reinvigorated her.

"We went on a week tour of (the Fashion Institute of Technology) and Parsons (School of Design), and I thought, 'This is incredible,'" she said. "I applied to Parsons and got into their two-year fashion marketing and design program. I interned at Women's Wear Daily, Oscar de la Renta, and after I graduated I worked at American Eagle's design center. It was magical."

While living in New York, she started a successful hair barrette and headband line, and even got her collection into Henri Bendel, an upscale New York specialty store. But she soon was itching to return back to Phoenix, where her sister and friends were.



Jennifer Boonlorn poses with the Integrity bag from her line, Soul Carrier. (Photo: Ty Schmitt)

In 2009, she returned when the new Barney's store at Scottsdale Fashion Square was about to open, and Boonlorn was asked to create a piece for the "Mannequin is our Muse" design competition. She teamed up with a friend who was an architect, and they purchased piles of colorful rag rugs from a dollar store. Her friend encouraged her to design something with the leftover materials.

"I ended up sewing it up by hand and needle, gluing on buttons and made raw, raw mock-ups," she said. "I thought, 'This is cool, I should do something with it.' I found people locally to sew up the bags, turned it into a business and collaborated with another friend with fashion industry experience."

The line, called the Journey Collection, featured a variety of bags created from rag rugs. A year later, she decided to try leather, and came out with the Authentic Change collection, naming bags after friends. Since it was difficult to find a local manufacturer, she traveled to León, Guanajuato, Mexico, and found a family of artisans to craft her leather bags, bringing cereal boxes with her to show the size and how angled she wanted her bags to be.

Boonlorn sold her bags to local boutiques and traveled to trade shows. With this third line, Conscious Intentions, she decided to try Kickstarter. Not only did it work, but she's earned nearly twice as much as her original goal.

The new line features sturdy, warm leather totes, messenger bags and spotted cowhide clutches, each style named for character traits: integrity, perseverance, authenticity and tenacity.

"The idea is that your life is dedicated to mindful living," Boonlorn said. "If you have a bag and someone stops you and asks, 'What is that?' And you tell them it's the Integrity bag by Soul Carrier, it could spark a cool conversation about what integrity means to you."

Once Boonlorn fulfills the Kickstarter orders, she'll offer the new collection on her website.

**Details:** [soulcarrier.com \(http://www.soulcarrier.com/\)](http://www.soulcarrier.com/)

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