

# Ultra Shaping Lower East Side Look

By Andrea Nagel

An uptown salon on the Lower East Side seems, at first, like a fish out of water. But like many neighborhoods being transformed into destination areas for unlikely interests — the Meatpacking District as a fashion and beauty mecca still seems strange — the area that's home to Yonah Schimmel and Katz's Deli now is attracting a woman who wants an "A" salon experience.

Since May, Ultra, located on 123 Essex Street, has been aiming to do just that.

Owned by Mary Jones and Randall Seale, Ultra needed new, bigger digs after it outgrew its former space on 233 East 4th Street, where it was for nine years. Now the 1,500-square-foot, two-story space offers 14 styling stations and three blowdry stations, and employs six senior stylists, a junior stylist and a nail technician. Annual sales are about \$650,000.

There is also a 300-square-foot retail area stocked with Japanese products such as Boce shampoos and treatments (\$17- \$25), Magic Move (a pomade, \$19) and Foundation Jell (a blow-dry serum, \$33), as well as MD Skin Care, Tigi items and MOP shampoos and conditioners.

Jones, a master colorist, selects items to sell that are formulated to maintain color, add moisture and protect hair from the sun.

"This helps to maintain the integrity of our work,"

said Jones, who approaches each head of hair as a dermatologist would approach skin. She assesses whether hair is colored, slightly damaged, moderately damaged or extremely damaged, and also takes into consideration any scalp conditions, such as flakiness, redness and dryness. She offers different conditioning treatments based on her assessment, and has elixirs for difficult-to-color hair.

"Gray hair is much less porous than nongray hair, so sometimes a treatment prior to coloring helps gray hair take the color better," said Jones. In these cases, she recommends Bonacure Repair Rescue 1 and 2, by Schwarzkopf, which she said is best for hair with uneven porosity.

Each stylist at Ultra has a specialty designed to meet every customer's needs.

Seale, an owner and operator of Ultra, is best known for turning women "Texan blonde." Tanya Pacht, a senior stylist and the salon's manager, has a way with hair extensions. Joe Calcagno, a senior stylist, is an expert blow-dryer, as well as a colorist and stylist. Samantha Tsistinas, a senior stylist, creates colorful do's and individualist haircuts. Kyoko Motonaga, also a senior stylist, flourishes at chemical treatments, such as perms, thermal relaxers and color



jobs. Manicures, pedicures, waxing, makeup application and eyebrow shaping are also available. Prices, which range from \$75 to \$125 for cuts and start at \$80 for a single process, make Ultra affordable for those without a huge budget.

"I think the atmosphere here says that everyone is welcome," said Jones. "It's a place where there's quality without all the pretense."