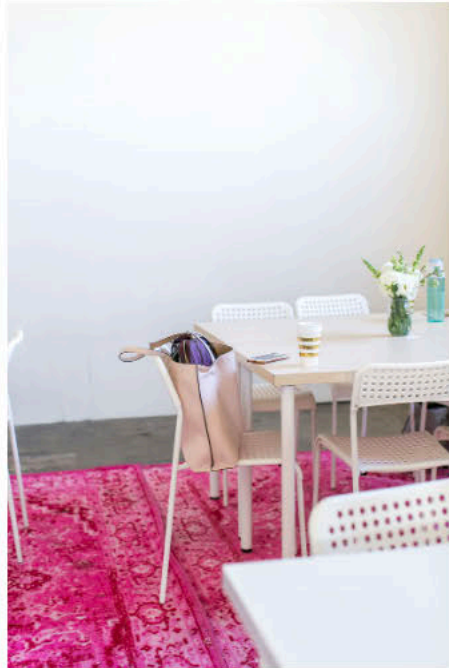


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GRACE BONNEY

*Design*Sponge*

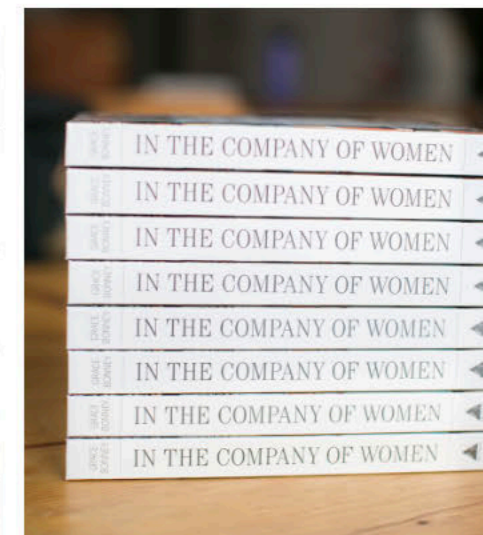
Grace Bonney is a woman who needs no introduction. In fact, over the past sixty-five interviews we've conducted for *Bossladies*, more than a quarter of the women have attributed some degree of their success to Grace. Her company, Design*Sponge, is one of the most-read blogs on the web, featuring a range of content from home tours and profiles to recipes, DIYs, and business advice (e.g. 10 Tips for Licensing Your Art.)

Grace started Design*Sponge in 2004 as a side project while she was working at a design PR firm. At the time, she was living in Greenpoint, Brooklyn. Each day on her walk to the subway she noticed interesting types of design and art emerging, yet magazines and newspapers weren't covering any of it. So during her lunch breaks, Grace wrote about the art she had seen, assuming that someday she'd use the blog as a resume to apply to a magazine.

A year later, *House & Garden* magazine asked Grace to create their website. It was exactly what she had wanted. But only two years later, the magazine closed. Grace moved to *Domino* magazine and worked for their website until they too closed. She realized that working at a magazine wasn't going to be the secure job she had imagined it would be. "I always thought print was the safest place you could go. You could get healthcare, a reliable paycheck..."

There may have been a time when that was true, but it clearly wasn't the case any longer. It was 2008, and most industries were unstable. Rather than seek out another position, Grace decided to make Design*Sponge full time. She got an accountant and a lawyer, made her first hires, and did competitive research to learn the best practices for managing a happy, productive team.

It will come as no surprise that our favorite content on Design*Sponge is Biz Ladies: a column with business advice and profiles on business owners. But we hadn't realized that Biz Ladies began as a live event. Grace first had the idea when she was attending a wine and cheese night at a friend's home. The guests were talking through some of their questions about taxes, and suddenly one woman, who ran an Etsy store said, "I'm so glad I don't have to worry about all these tax things because I don't have to pay taxes on my Etsy account."



Grace was shocked. She realized many business owners lacked an understanding of fundamental aspects of running a business. (Years before, she had made a tax error herself that almost caused her to go bankrupt.) So Grace embarked on an eight city event series to help women across the country learn business skills. In each city she assembled a panel of five experts, herself included, who taught guests, pro-bono, about publicity and marketing, wholesale pricing, hiring and firing, and legal. Eventually, Biz Ladies morphed into a column on the blog with articles on business-related topics like: 10 Golden Rules About Getting Paid As A Creative.

Last year, Grace published *In The Company of Women*, a collection of Q+As by a diverse group of female makers, artists, and entrepreneurs that seems, in some ways, the culmination of Biz Ladies. It was supposed to be another DIY book, or at least that's the book her publisher had bought, but for a year and a half, Grace avoided the project. Her heart wasn't in it, and she knew that a book on diverse women business owners would be so much more impactful. "I went in [to my publisher] and said, 'You can have your money back OR, here's this totally different idea.'" They agreed to let her switch topics and gave her a two-month deadline to write and photograph the whole collection.

Over the past year, Grace has become increasingly more vocal about politics, social justice, and the need for activism. Some have told her to "stay in her lane" and "keep writing about houses," but she refuses. "It doesn't just feel lame to not talk about it. It feels irresponsible...It's not the job of the people who are directly affected by this stuff to do all the work."



Never be afraid to ask the questions you need to ask. I spent way too much time not asking questions because I thought I should already know the answers.

What is the inspiration behind your business?

My business mission is constantly evolving. In the beginning I simply wanted to have a place to talk about things I loved that weren't being given the attention they deserved. Then I realized how few people were supporting handmade work, so I dedicated myself to raising support and awareness for handmade artists. As I got to know those makers better, I realized how many of them didn't have the basic business information or education they needed, so I began to weave business advice and in-person events into my business structure. These days, I'm most inspired by finding and celebrating the connection between creativity and business—how they inform each other and how we can support people trying to do both.

How would you describe your working dynamic with other women? Easier than working with men? More challenging?

I personally don't notice a huge difference in working dynamics when it comes to genders, except when it comes to pricing. I've found that, across the board, men are more comfortable asking for more money, and both men and women tend to accept men's demands without question. I try to make sure the women I work with know to ask for what they're worth and aren't afraid to stand by that number when they're questioned.

What was one of the hardest things you encountered as you built Design*Sponge?

I almost always choose my ethics and desire to do good over a desire to make money, but over the years that has limited—and hurt—my business. These days I try to make passion projects profitable, so they'll have a greater chance of succeeding and aren't just flash-in-the-pan ideas.

Where do you see yourself, and your business, in ten years? Do you think that far ahead?

The blogging industry and ad market are changing constantly, so at this point, the only thing I can picture is my personal life. In ten years, I hope to have one or two children with my wife and to be an involved member of our community, wherever that may be. I hope I'm still doing work that includes face-to-face time with women in business and using the skills I've learned from blogging in ways that help serve the greater good.

What advice do you have for women who want to start their own businesses?

Never be afraid to ask the questions you need to ask. I spent too much time not asking questions because I thought I should already know the answers. But admitting what you don't know and actually learning will always serve your business. Also, make sure you read every contract at least three times—and then hire a lawyer to read it too.





EVA GOICOCHEA

Maude, Tinker, eg studio

One night in 2012, Eva Goicochea was scrolling through her Twitter feed when she discovered a minimal and “radically transparent” new clothing company called Everlane. She loved their aesthetic, so at 2 am. that night, she wrote their CEO to ask for a meeting. Shortly after, Eva began running Everlane’s social media, culture, and hiring from a tiny office in Los Angeles. When the company decided to consolidate and move everyone to San Francisco, Eva realized it was time for a shift in her career: she knew she wasn’t willing to leave her new LA home for a city where she and her husband would need to find a roommate in order to afford rent.

Eva started freelancing as a brand strategist and Squarespace site designer. One of her very first clients was her close friend, Jennifer Puno. Puno (as she’s called) had been building Made With Map, and she brought Eva on to run the Instagram and help onboard new users. Energized by this newfound independence in her career, Eva has since built roughly eighty websites for businesses ranging from an LA-based catering company, room forty, to the NYC coffee shop Happy Bones.

These days, in addition to her freelance design and strategy projects, Eva also runs two e-commerce businesses of her own: Tinker, a modern watch company, and Maude, the newest and most beautiful sex products on the market.

Raw Finish Jumper by Hackwith Design House / photography: Marisa Vitale



Raw Finish Jumper by Hackwith Design House

Be well-versed in the space you plan to occupy.

What is the inspiration behind your business?

Maude is about bringing back the era of beautifully-packaged sex essentials (look up “vintage condoms”) while creating an open, honest, and universal conversation about sexual health. We want to make sex fun, smart, and for all people. We’re not just another condom company aimed at only one gender or sexuality.

Do you have a daily routine? If so, what does it look like?

My husband and I both work primarily from home, which means that we wake up, get ready, feed four little mouths (two rescued dogs and two rescued cats), and make a spirulina smoothie to get in some greens. Then we’ll sit down with some tea or water to knock through emails. After a quick lunch and working until we can’t see straight, we’ll try to get together with friends for dinner or take a walk to stretch our legs. It’s a quiet life for most of the day, and then at night, we get a chance to immerse ourselves in the city. We’re both night owls anyway.

Where do you see yourself, and your business, in 10 years?

My plan is to sustainably grow Maude to be the most well-known, trusted, modern sex essentials company that is both forward-thinking and one of the best places to work. We want to revolutionize an industry that, until now, has been dominated by outdated marketing, tone-deaf messaging, horrible packaging, and a crappy experience—not to mention a misogynist culture.

What is one thing about you that most people don’t know?

Online, I try to be composed and even-keeled, but in person, I go through life with a sense of humor so as to remain grateful and hopeful.

What is your relationship with your business partners like?

Dina and Maya, my co-founders of Maude, are some of the best women I know. They’re incredibly smart, thoughtful, kind humans, and they both bring immense knowledge and curiosity to the table.

What advice do you have for women who want to start their own businesses?

The confidence of starting, running, and growing a business comes from knowing your corner of the world: what makes you unique, the market, your audience, etc. So my advice is to be well-versed in the space you plan to occupy. Also, never shy away from competition, but rather take it as an opportunity to make yourself stronger.

@tinkerwatches
www.tinkerwatches.com

@getmaude
www.getmaude.com

@evagoicochea
www.evagoicochea.com



JEN RUBIO

Away



A scenario all too relatable—You’re in the middle of the airport, ready to check into your flight, and suddenly your phone dies. You scramble to find an outlet in the terminal and try to resurrect your phone before you need to board. This is precisely the unnecessary travel stressor that Jen Rubio and Steph Korey knew they could help people avoid. So they created a suitcase that is not only sleek and gorgeous, but also incredibly utilitarian: their bags will actually charge your phone.

Jen and Steph met when they were both working for everyone’s favorite eyewear startup, Warby Parker. Jen was running Warby’s social media, and Steph worked on the supply chain. A few years later, after Jen moved to London for a position as the Global Head of Innovation at All Saints and Steph attended Columbia Business School, the two teamed up to fill a void in the market for relatable, beloved luggage brands.

Although Away launched just last year, they’ve already become the go-to supplier for many an avid traveler. In 2016 alone, they made ten million in revenue, raised about eleven million in funding, and grew a team of about 42. Now that they’ve created the perfect suitcase, Away aspires to mold into more of a lifestyle brand—creating the perfect iteration of each of your travel accessories.

www.awaytravel.com / @away / photographer: Marisa Vitale



Do you have a daily routine? If so, what does it look like?

I love waking up early and owning the first few hours of the day. I usually go to boxing (Work Train Fight) or pilates (New York Pilates), come back home to get ready, and kick off a few calls or emails while at home. Then I walk to work. On the way, I stop to get a strong coffee—a four-shot cortado, to be exact—at Gasoline Alley or Happy Bones, then walk past the Away store to our office in SoHo. When I get to work, I get pulled into meetings and brainstorming, shoots, and press engagements. Toward the end of the day, I finally have time to think, strategize, and plan. I love sandwiching my creative “me time” on both ends of team time.

What was your professional highlight of the past year?

Away is less than a year old, so it's been a year of firsts: launching the brand, growing the team, moving into bigger offices (twice and counting), and seeing more Away bags every time I go to the airport. This year, we opened a store in New York and pop-ups in Los Angeles, London, and Berlin.

How do you mitigate anxiety or stress when it arises?

Instead of pushing it away, I allow myself to feel everything fully: so if I'm anxious or stressed, I really let myself freak out for a minute or two in a “here's the worst thing that could happen” way. And then I move on or go into problem-solving mode.

Where do you see yourself, and your business, in ten years? Do you think that far ahead?

I know what success will look like for me: working with a team of brilliant, creative people; generating new, relevant ideas; building something that people recognize and love. Whatever I'm doing in ten years, I hope it reflects that. It's important to have long-term goals but also be really present in what's happening now.

What is one thing about you that most people don't know?

I'm licensed to skydive, scuba dive, fly a plane, sail, and hunt... but not to drive a car.

What is the best part of your day?

Making beautiful things. All. Day. Long.

It's important to have long-term goals but also be really present in what's happening now.



KAI AVENT-DELEON

Sincerely, Tommy

When Kai was sixteen, her mom told her to get a job. So she marched down to a boutique in Fort Greene and handed them her rather unimpressive resume. Even without experience, the owner hired her as an intern, and Kai quickly fell in love with the idea of owning a store: she discovered its potential as a hub for creativity and support system for emerging designers. In the years that followed, Kai worked in a variety of different retail settings, gathering bits of wisdom along the way. She was only twenty-six when she actualized her dream and opened Sincerely, Tommy, named after the store’s location on Tompkins Avenue.

Sincerely, Tommy has become a canvas on which Kai can express whatever she is going through personally, so the store has morphed and changed over the years as she has matured. She’s currently in a minimal phase, ridding herself of objects so she has more freedom, and you can sense this in the space, which is sparsely merchandized and feels more like a fashion museum than a retail establishment.

Kai’s vision is for Sincerely, Tommy to serve not only as a boutique, but as a gathering space for her community. She partnered with Dan Solomito to create a coffee shop element, and she hosts a number of events—from a book club to “Sip and Sketch” where people gather to draw a nude model. Recently, Kai hosted a mentorship session with 30 kids from Covenant House, a charity serving homeless youth, to discuss how to start a brand.

www.sincerelytommy.com / @kaiventdeleon / @sincerelytommy_ / photography: Marisa Vitale



*Have a very specific vision.
After that, everything else will fall in line.*

What was one of the hardest things you encountered as you built Sincerely, Tommy?

I come from an old-school retail background where online shopping wasn't as popular, so breaking into that market was a challenge. I had to figure out ways to make our products appeal to people online the same way they do in the store—especially since our pieces are so unique. Now we have a lot of fun with it; we use friends as models and shoot in the neighborhood.

with it. I went to Mexico City to find fabric and had everything made in NYC. I have an amazing production manager, who has been a tremendous blessing. The biggest moment was when our line got picked up by stores here and abroad. I did a double take when I saw how many orders we got!

What is the next goal you have your sights set on?

I really want to mold our community-based initiatives. There is a lot of negative stuff going on in this world, and I don't believe these problems would still be happening if we each took the time to ensure the well-being of our communities.

How is your company different now than when you began?

When we first opened, I was concerned about offering unique products, and now, as I grow personally, my goal is not only that, but also to serve my community. I see a lot of young people in Bed-Stuy who haven't been afforded the same advantages I had growing up, so I want to make sure I give back and do what I can to serve them.

What is the best part of your day?

Listening to music at the end of the day either alone or with friends or lovers.

What advice do you have for women who want to start their own businesses?

Have a very specific vision. After that, everything else will fall in line.

What was your professional highlight of the past year?

Launching our clothing line was a huge moment for me. I am not a trained designer, so putting together a line was a new experience, and I had a lot of fun



S.T COFFEE	
HOT	
COFFEE 2.5	MATCHA LATTE 6
CAFE AU LAIT 2.75	HONEY LATTE 4.5
ESPRESSO 3	MOCHA 4.5
AMERICANO 3.25	HOT COCO 4.25
MACCHIATO 3.5	MASALA CHAI 4.25
CAPPUCINO 4	BELLOCO TEA 3.5
LATTE 4.25	MATCHA
COLD	
COLD BREW 4	ICED TEA 4
ICED AMERICANO 3.75	ICED MASALA CHAI 4.75
ICED LATTE 4.75	ICED MATCHA
ICED MOCHA 5	ICED MATCHA LATTE 6
	APPLE CIDER 3
EATS	
CRISPSANTS 3-3.50	VANILLA CREAM DONUT
APPLE CHEDDAR SCONES 3.75	COOKIES 2.5
SPINACH FETA TOMATO 4	
** NEW **	



REBECCA ATWOOD

Rebecca Atwood Designs

Rebecca Atwood's textiles are some of the most recognizable designs of our time. She creates patterns that calm the heart and add a pop of color to any space, and her book *Living With Pattern* is on display at nearly all of our favorite shops. With a second book on the way and a new line of wallpapers and fabrics that just hit the market, Rebecca is at the top of her game.

While many creative entrepreneurs have a circuitous journey that ultimately leads them to start their business, Rebecca's path was clear and direct. One job led seamlessly to the next, and they each gave her an additional layer of knowledge and experience she'd need to start her own company.

After graduating from RISD with a degree in fine art, Rebecca took a position at Anthropologie. Each week, she was responsible for designing three to five products, which included an array of home commodities—from measuring cups to bedding. Despite the fact that she was doing work she enjoyed, over time Rebecca realized there was no space for her to grow within the company.

After moving from Philly to New York, Rebecca took a position with a design consultancy firm, where she learned the ins and outs of managing production. However, designing products that echoed current trends seemed like the wrong approach to her. And on top of that, she wanted more control over the production decisions and to focus, first and foremost, on quality.

Rebecca decided to consult independently and launch her own line. She planned a strategic safety net: 75% of her income would come from consulting and the balance would come from her line.

Four years later, her product line has diversified drastically to include fabric by the yard, wallpaper, quilts, and blankets. Although the business has grown significantly, Rebecca's driving force remains the same: helping people align their spaces with who they are and who they want to be.

It's the persistence to
*keep showing up and
working on your craft*
that ultimately
yields results.

continued...

(If you're a product-based business, I highly recommend getting a line of credit before you think you need it. You won't be able to get very much capital in the beginning, so you want to make sure you give yourself enough time to build a relationship with your banker before you need larger sums of money.)

Also, in the beginning it felt like I was on a roller coaster; the highs and lows were extreme. I thought everything would make or break us. But that simply wasn't true. You need to hang in there and keep at it. I believe so much of life is showing up and doing the work. People often think creativity means you're struck with inspiration like magic, and while there's an element of that, it's the persistence to keep showing up and working on your craft that ultimately yields results.

What was your professional highlight of the past year?

This past year was a big one, and there were two major highlights: my collaboration with Method Home on a limited-edition collection of soaps and cleaning products, as well as the launch of my first book *Living with Pattern*. Working with Method was particularly wonderful because they are such an amazing company. They recently opened their very own factory in the South Side of Chicago. It's

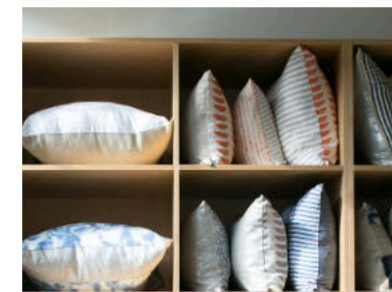
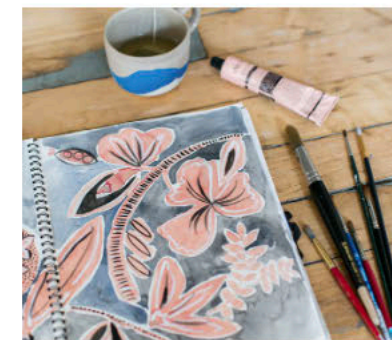
the first LEED Platinum Certified factory and has the world's largest greenhouse on the roof. I loved working with them to merge my patterns with fragrance and create something that was accessible without compromising design or sustainability. It was a dream collaboration.

What is the most challenging aspect of being a boss?

For me, the hardest aspect is communication. It's a simple concept, but I think it's at the root of most issues. I find there's often so much going on in my head that I need to sit down and get it on paper, so I can be clear with my team (and myself).

How is your company different now than when you began?

We've grown so much! I started the business in the second bedroom of our Park Slope apartment. In the beginning, it was a one-woman show. I was dyeing in the kitchen, washing screens in the bathroom, storing pillow inserts in our bedroom, packing and shipping out of the living room, and working in the spare bedroom. It was a little crazy, but it allowed me to get here. Now I have two employees, and we just moved into a bigger space in Brooklyn. It allowed us to grow from 700 square feet to 1300, which feels so good!





NADINE ABRAMCYK &
ADAIR ILYINSKY

tenoverten

A business partnership is as intimate as a marriage.

One night over a glass of wine, Nadine Abramcyk and Adair Ilyinsky discussed their gripes with nail salons: the fluorescent lighting, unhygienic atmospheres, and minimal customer service. Before the evening was over, they decided to open a salon that would elevate the manicure experience for New York women. With capital raised from friends and family, Nadine and Adair opened tenoverten in Tribeca a year later.

Prior to starting the salon, Nadine worked in PR for Time Inc. and owned a boutique called Mick Margo, and Adair worked in operations finance at Coach. Both women really liked their jobs, but they were even more passionate about starting tenoverten. In the six years since launching the flagship salon, they've opened five additional locations—three more in New York, one in Austin, and one in Los Angeles.

Their mission to create the ultimate non-toxic nail experience came later when they each became pregnant. Suddenly they were hyperaware of all the chemicals in beauty products and the toxic air quality in most nail salons. Their belief in a safe, healthy manicure experience now lies at the center of their business model, and, in partnership with Nadine's sister Jaclyn, they offer their own line of eight-free, cruelty-free, and vegan nail polish. They're committed to raising the standards of their entire industry through example by providing safe work environments and protecting workers' rights.

www.tenoverten.com / @tenoverten / photography: Marisa Vitale

What was the hardest thing you encountered as you brought tenoverten to fruition?

Adair: When we began, we didn't know the first thing about opening a nail salon. We hired a celebrity manicurist, and she lent us her expertise. Of course, we're nail experts now, but it was an important lesson that there are so many resources out there and there's no shame in asking for help!

What is the next goal you have your sights set on?

Nadine: I would love to see tenoverten products become staples in people's homes, replacing nail products with nasty chemicals. We've created products that eliminate unnecessary toxins without compromising the quality, and we hope to help women around the world create cleaner beauty habits.

Do you have a daily routine?

Adair: We built an office for ourselves in our Fulton Street salon, which opened about a year ago. Before that, I was bouncing around from one salon to another, getting most of my work done from a pedicure chair. Now that we have an office, my day is much more structured. I usually wake up at 6:30 with my girls and read books and color with them until our sitter comes at 8. Then I rush off to an exercise class and try to be at the office by 11. The part that's not routine is what happens between 11 and when I head home at 6. I could be doing anything from interviewing nail technicians to enrolling our employees in Obamacare to working on an investor deck. I try to sneak out a few times a week to pick up Esme from school or take Louisa to a class. Nighttime allows me a few more hours with the kiddos, and I try to go to sleep by 10:30—with a little

assistance from some Chill Aromatic Alchemy from Naturopathica.

What is one thing about you that most people don't know?

Nadine: I have an incredible fear of public speaking. I'm trying to overcome it...

How would you describe your working dynamic with other women?

Adair: It's funny because I rarely think about the fact that I work with so many women. I certainly appreciate that I feel supported in my effort to "do it all." I can speak openly about plans I have with my kids—taking them to the pediatrician, going to their winter recital, or hosting a playdate—and not feel judged that I am somehow sacrificing time I could be working.

What is one of your greatest fears?

Nadine: That when we open the doors to a new salon no one will come! I deal with it by inviting friends to come during the first few weeks to ensure that there are at least some people in the seats. But more seriously, it is that the salons won't be busy enough to sustain our business, which supports over 150 employees who I admire so much.

How do you mitigate anxiety or stress when it arises?

Adair: I recently read a piece of advice from another female entrepreneur that really resonated with me: she suggested coming up with a list of 3-5 things that MUST get done the next day. I do that religiously now, and throughout the day when I get distracted, I force myself to redirect back to the list.



What is your relationship with your business partners like?

Adair: A business partnership is as intimate as a marriage. The same issues that come up in a marriage—money, contribution, etc.—come up in a business partnership. Nadine and I have learned that the more honest we are with each other about how we're feeling, the easier it is for the other person to be supportive. I always say it's as if there is a black hole between us where all of the worry gets sucked up.

Has building tenoverten changed you in any way?

Nadine: It has changed my perspective on life. When I feel overwhelmed, I remind myself that I chose to be in this position. That allows me to appreciate the fact that I get to do these things and helps me move through the challenges.

bossladies

ISSUE 03 / NEW YORK



The image shows a book cover with a light-colored, marbled pattern of veins in shades of grey and white. The title 'bossladies' is centered in a black, elegant serif font. Below it, the subtitle 'ISSUE 03 / NEW YORK' is printed in a smaller, black, sans-serif font. The book is set against a light grey, rounded rectangular background.

bossladies

ISSUE 03 / NEW YORK