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A MUSEUM STORE ASSOCIATION SHOWCASE OF NEW PRODUCTS

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The Principle of Giving

BY AMY NICHOLS

A commendable sector of the cultural commerce community builds its business on the principle of giving. Whether they are organized as nonprofit or fair trade, or are simply committed to supporting these ideals, these operations do indeed profit — and empower others to profit — by working to preserve culture and fortify community through commerce.

COMMITTED TO FAIR TRADE

As defined by the Fair Trade Federation (FTF), “Fair Trade means an equitable and fair partnership between marketers in North America and producers in Asia, Africa, Latin America and other parts of the world. A fair trade partnership works to provide low-income artisans and farmers with a living wage for their work.” Members of the FTF commit to uphold certain criteria, including paying a fair wage in the local context, providing equal employment and advancement opportunities for all people, particularly the most disadvantaged, engaging in environmentally sustainable practices, developing long-term trade arrangements, and providing healthy and safe working conditions.

President and Founder of Aid Through Trade Damian Jones has a deep affection for the country and the people of Nepal. His Annapolis, MD-based, demand-driven business builds on the traditional skills of Nepalese beading and Vietnamese silk weaving to create interesting and elegant contemporary western jewelry. The effervescent color palettes of their glass beaded jewelry are continually changing, remaining fresh for old and new customers alike. See their colorful designs at www.aidthroughtrade.com, or request a digital catalog from info@aidthroughtrade.com.



Don Lam, president of Fair Trade Quilts & Crafts in Virginia Beach, VA, educates indigenous weavers in Bangladesh, Guatemala, India, Nepal and other countries on how to break into the U.S. and international markets. His company works closely with these artisans to design products that are adaptations of their cultural designs and patterns. Their products range from patchwork pillow covers and quilts to Mayan huipile tapestries and ceramic mugs. See all of their offerings at www.fairtradequilts.com.

Renice Jones, owner of Global Crafts in Edgewater, FL, specializes in importing museum-quality, high-end items from artisans in Kenya, Uganda, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Haiti, Chile, Colombia, Bolivia, Mexico and the Philippines. They also import olive oil soaps from the West Bank. “We provide producer information cards with each



product and also have various display options available, making it easy for museum stores to take advantage of the product story,” adds Jones. Find out more on their wholesale Web site www.globalcraftsb2b.com.



JAMTOWN in Seattle, WA, offers exotic instruments, rhythm kits and musical games from around the world. Each product comes with a story card that provides background information about the instrument and

the artisans who made it. Activity guides show the user how to play musical games that are fun for all ages. “Music is that great realm of similarity that we share around the world,” says founder John Hayden. Stop by Booth #620 at the MSA Expo to see a demo of Hayden’s “Homer and Roamer” game, played with a Singing Fun Drum Stack. See the full spectrum of instruments at www.jamtown.com.

Alessandra Bravo, president and designer of Lucuma Designs in Sarasota, FL, and a current board member of the FTF, says, “As a Peruvian, I am proud to help people in my country while sharing the great quality and history of Peruvian art and craft with people around the world.” Lucuma Designs offers contemporary fine crafts and original folk art that complements museums’ educational and cultural missions. View this bright and inspiring collection at www.lucuma.com.



Mariposa Indigenous Art in Friday Harbor, WA, imports textiles, carved ceremonial masks and other crafts made by Borucan Indian artisans in the Costa Rican rainforest. Lauren Jawer named her venture Mariposa (Spanish for butterfly). “A butterfly migrates, carrying exotic beauty and pollinating life on its way. Our aim is to emulate this important life-sustaining adventure by promoting the handmade crafts of indigenous people of Costa Rica.” Explore their products at www.mariposaimports.com.



Singing Shaman Traders in Hauser Lake, ID, imports one-of-a-kind Mexican handcrafts such as Tarahumara Indian baskets, pottery and goatskin drums, Huichol Indian beadwork and yarn paintings, and Taxco silver jewelry. The Tarahumara Indians are one of the most primitive and impoverished tribes in North America. A percentage of proceeds goes back to the producers and to the Tarahumara children’s hospital. “We’re the only FTF member offering Mata Ortiz pottery,” prides owner Nancy Spada. Learn more about this indigenous art at www.singingshamantraders.com.

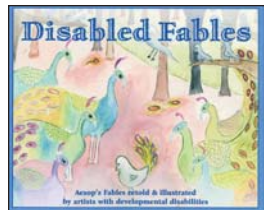


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NONPROFITS PROVIDING SUSTENANCE

Bridge for Africa, a nonprofit organization in San Francisco, CA, imports baskets, jewelry and housewares from Zulu, Xhosa, San and Himba artisans, among others, that are not commonly found in the U.S. market. "By working directly with artists themselves under a nonprofit model, we are able to offer low wholesale prices," offers Lindsay Harris, managing director. See these unique crafts at www.bridgeforafrica.org, or stop by Booth #748 at the Expo.



L.A. Goal in Culver City, CA, is a nonprofit organization that also exists to improve the quality of life for others. One of a variety of programs it offers for adults with developmental disabilities is a commercial art business. Adults with autism, mental retardation, learning disabilities and neurological challenges, including epilepsy and cerebral palsy, create art that is reproduced on cards, tote bags, aprons and other items. "It provides them with the opportunity to increase their independence by earning above minimum wage for their work," explains Margaret Goodenough. Stop by MSA Expo Booth #543 or learn more at www.insideoutproductions.com.

Tilonia in Brooklyn, NY, sells crafts created by artisans of the Barefoot College in Tilonia, Rajasthan, India. Ellen Fish, executive director of the U.S.-based nonprofit Friends of Tilonia Inc., says, "We work with rural poor artisans to identify products that will succeed in the U.S. market." Products available include hand-crafted textiles, including

appliqué, block printing, embroidery, weaving and furniture. Barefoot College teaches practical knowledge and skills through life experience that in turn strengthen the community's economic development. See their goods at www.tilonia.com.



FORTIFYING COMMERCE ACROSS CULTURES

Discarded magazines are the basis for functional, unique products imported from Brazil by Brazzil Arts in Denver, CO.

"Moderately priced purses, notebooks and baskets help organize lives and preserve the environment," says Mary Pierce, owner. Wholesale price ranges from \$5 - \$20. An attached story card tells how purchases benefit Brazilian youth-at-risk and ultimately support stronger communities in Brazil.

Creative Women in Grand Isle, VT, carries a broad spectrum of hand-woven Ethiopian textiles in the form of scarves, pillows, table runners, shawls, wall hangings, mats and pocket-books. "We showcase the elegant items from Ethiopia that can complement African or textile exhibits," says Ellen Dorsch. "What we are producing has a soul and a heart, made by people who are being paid well and valued for continuing an artisan tradition." Find



textiles at www.creativewomen.net, or visit MSA Expo Booth #232.

Escama, Portuguese for "fish scales," is a San Francisco, CA-based company that makes hand-crocheted accessories using 100% recycled aluminum pop tops. The bags are the work of individual craftswomen of the Cia do Lacre and 100 Dimensao cooperatives located in Brasilia, Brazil. Each bag contains the signature, photo and bio of the artist. View their photos and complete bios at www.escama.com. See the products in person in Booth #844 at the MSA Expo.



Flatdog (African slang for crocodile) in Westfield, IN, supports a workshop in Zambia, a nation suffering from extreme poverty and widespread HIV / AIDS infection. About 200 villager artisans individually design and hand paint cotton textile products and elephant dung paper note cards in a fair trade-audited operation. See their traditional African and contemporary soft furnishings, accessories, bags and children's products at www.flatdog.com, or stop by Booth #832 at the MSA Expo.

When you order merchandise from these and other vendors committed to the principle of giving, know that you are not only stocking your store with one-of-a-kind products, you are contributing to the greater good of humanity. ☺