

# Style

## THE NEW ART GUARD

*Five women under 40  
bringing fresh perspectives  
to San Francisco.  
Page 6*



**Epicenter**  
*Everlane mobilizes  
its forces.  
Page 4*



**Guide Book**  
*Eco-minded paper goods  
for Earth Day.  
Page 8*



**The List**  
*Beauty to rock at music  
festivals.  
Page 9*

**Union Squared**  
*Childhood crush leads to lifelong  
union. Page 10*



## GUIDE BOOK



EARTH DAY

## A PAPER TRAIL OF TREES

Eco-minded online stationery company rooted in modern design and sustainability

By Nerissa Pacio Itchon

If you called Christopher Wu a tree-hugger, he'd consider it a compliment.

Wu is the founder and CEO of Paper Culture in Millbrae. The eco-friendly online stationery company uses 100 percent post-consumer recycled paper, plants a tree with every order and ships customers their products in a reusable, reversible graphic tree-print box accompanied by a packet of Blue Spruce seeds.

"We didn't just pick trees because they were fun," says 41-year-old Wu, a Hillsborough resident who co-founded Paper Culture in 2009 after working as an executive at Yahoo, Snapfish and Hewlett-Packard. "We look at trees as one of the most incredible gifts that nature can give us."

Six years after launching his startup, which marries a sustainable ethos with a modern aesthetic, Wu can rattle off statistics that illustrate why trees are so awesome.

"One mature tree produces enough oxygen to support a couple for one year," he says. In



View the full assortment at [www.paperculture.com](http://www.paperculture.com)

light of California's drought, Wu eagerly shares the factoid: "A fully grown tree emits an average of 240 to 400 gallons of water per day!"

It's this love of trees that has driven Paper Culture to plant — via donations to environmental organizations — more than 350,000 of them in the U.S. and abroad in areas that have been over-forested or hit by wildfires. Wu's ultimate goal? To plant more than a million trees in the next several years.

Recently, other Bay Area stationery companies, including San Francisco's Minted and Shutterfly-owned Tiny Prints in Sunnyvale, have followed suit, launching their own tree-planting programs to offset paper usage.

Minted has partnered with Plant-It 2020, a nonprofit that plants indigenous tree seedlings in non-logging sites, to plant 100,000 trees by September 2015.

Tiny Prints announced this month that it will partner with American Forests to plant 350,000 Ponderosa pines and Douglas firs across 2,000 acres in Oregon's Deschutes National Forest, which was affected by lightning fires in 2012.

"If we want to offset our paper usage," says Tiny Prints' General Manager Maria Reiling, "let's do it in a way that supports families where they can enjoy themselves together."

Minted and Tiny Prints may be competitors, but Wu views the tree-planting trend, perhaps sparked by Paper Culture's lead, as a positive one.

"This is the one type of thing where if you're in the mission



Photos by Liz Hafalia / The Chronicle

**Above:** Paper Culture CEO Christopher Wu. Top: Photo wall art from renewable bamboo. Left: Memory Game made from recycled paper.

to do good, and if your competition imitates, then you really are making an impact," he says.

In addition to planting trees, Paper Culture infuses sustainability into its everyday practices. Its 4,000-square-foot office in Millbrae was chosen in part for its walkability to the Caltrain-BART commuter hub; it uses recycled ink cartridges and 100 percent post-consumer recycled copy paper. Wu's team even set into motion a recycling program for the whole building on El Camino Real, which was lacking when Paper Culture moved in four years ago.

While improving the environment is at the heart of its mission, Paper Culture is ultimately in the business of selling personalized products with innovative, fresh and modern designs. Birth announcements, holiday cards and stationery remain core to its assortment. The company also recently began offering eco-friendly

wall art, including panels handcrafted in the Bay Area from bamboo, a highly renewable resource, and nontoxic, recycled cloth wall decals (versus the more common PVC decals) that look like Polaroid-meets-Instagram photos.

The company also plans to launch its first assortment of wedding stationery — including invitations, thank-you notes, belly bands, save-the-dates and RSVP, reception and info cards — in July.

In honor of Earth Day, Paper Culture's staff volunteers for an annual project. This year it will be a sidewalk garden installation in San Francisco with Friends of the Urban Forest.

"We infuse into our DNA that sense of responsibility," says Wu. "It really helps to define who we are."

Nerissa Pacio Itchon is a Bay Area freelance writer. E-mail: [style@sfgchronicle.com](mailto:style@sfgchronicle.com)

THE LOOKER

## COOL IN ANY LANGUAGE

For twin sisters and designers Sara Brady and Ashley Cornill of Kin/K Hats, the "California cool" aesthetic is all about incorporating an international outlook.

"We take a lot of inspiration from our travels," Cornill says. The Bay Area natives have visited 14 countries (and counting) together and bring their experiences home to San Francisco, where they can translate them in a wearable way through their stylish toppers.

"We're definitely the women we design for," Brady says of Kin/K's target customer. "A hat needs to be comfortable for traveling or at home; it needs to block the sun, but it still needs to say something about your style."

Kin/K's spring collection draws inspiration from the sisters' time in Spain and specifically references "the versatility and chic of Mallorca coastal life, where you could throw on a great hat for the beach or wear it shopping." Kin/K's black straw Capri bolero (\$159) recalls the iconic headgear of Spanish bullfighters and fishermen, as well as hacienda living in early California. But whether it's the sun of the Mediterranean or the Pacific beating down on you, the bolero offers ample shade with its circular brim — a consideration for any gypsy-setter looking to keep her complexion sun-kissed, not sunburned.

— Tony Bravo, [connectivity@sfgchronicle.com](mailto:connectivity@sfgchronicle.com)



View the full collection at [www.kinkhats.com](http://www.kinkhats.com) or attend Kin/K's trunk show April 29 from 4-7 p.m. at 7 on Locust in Mill Valley. [www.7onlocust.com](http://www.7onlocust.com) for more info.



Kin/K