

THE *Handmade Tale*

A BEVY OF VALLEY BOUTIQUES
INCORPORATES THE ARTISANAL
AND BESPOKE INTO THEIR
LOCALLY SOURCED OFFERINGS.

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HANDPAINTED. HANDCRAFTED. HANDWOVEN.
Nothing can match the personalized touch of an item that is lovingly produced by an artist—especially when it is made by someone within your community and sold at a locally owned shop.

Over the past decade, the maker movement has seen tremendous growth in Arizona, bolstered by a strong and expanding network of independent businesses and a citizenry that embraces creativity and lets ingenuity flourish. We take a look at seven small Valley businesses that showcase the diversity and artistry that the Grand Canyon State has to offer.

MADE ART BOUTIQUE

“When we opened in 2005, there weren’t really places in the Valley to buy handmade items by Arizona artists,” recalls Cindy Dach, owner of downtown Phoenix’s Made Art Boutique. Housed since its inception in a small bungalow on Roosevelt Street, Made has undergone numerous changes over the years. Originally a companion to the celebrated Eye Lounge artist collective, serving as a space for locally crafted objects at approachable price points, Made grew to take over the home’s main floor and offer goods by about 50 creatives.

This spring, the business once again underwent a makeover, downsizing in space—but not in product selection—as it makes room for a new outpost and tasting room for Greenwood Brewery, Arizona’s only female-run brewery. “There are ebbs and flows of what people are looking for, and that’s what we respond to,” Dach explains. Shoppers can still find their favorite functional ceramics,



books, stickers, candles, incense, jewelry, t-shirts and baby gifts. “Our inventory is very highly curated because it’s a small space, but we love what we have,” Dach adds.

“When you’re having cereal in the morning out of a handmade bowl, it nourishes the soul,” she continues. “I think knowing who made the object that you’re holding in your hands is what helps make community.” (madephx.com)



GATHER

Lauren Hillery (right) and Hannah Alley met while working together at a marketing company. After a 2017 encounter with the owners of The Churchill, a collective of eateries and small businesses housed in shipping containers in downtown Phoenix, they set their sights on retail. “We try to source makers who don’t have as much of a presence in other businesses, giving them a space to have a broader reach for their audiences,” Hillery explains.

The cornerstone of the store is goods for the home and self. Wellness products, accessories and art handcrafted by about 50 artisans from across the state make up more than 80% of the product line. “This is all about the local artists,” Hillery says. “We don’t exist without them. We exist for them. And giving them a space to shine and be inspired by the desert is a beautiful thing.” (gatherphx.com)



DESERT CRAFTED

As a painter, Laura Plecas has been part of the downtown Phoenix art scene for the last 18 years. So when she decided to give up her day job as a massage therapist and open a boutique, it was no surprise that handcrafted works by local artisans would be a staple of her new business. “Whenever I would go shopping, I would be disappointed that I couldn’t find anything that was handmade, high-quality, sustainable and exciting,” she recalls. “I want to support all of my artist friends and people I know who are makers locally and throughout the state.”

Large windows flood the tiny brick-lined shop with natural light, casting a warm glow. Pottery by Paradise Valley resident Kate Madrigal and jewelry by Alex Ozer of Phoenix share shelf space with creosote-based skincare products from Tucson’s Sonoran Rosie and coffee from Old Bisbee Roasters. “My mission statement when I created this shop was to represent the desert and the desert lifestyle,” Plecas notes. “I love that there’s such a huge maker community here. It’s what gives a city character.” (desertcrafted.com)



MOON DUST FARMS

Dawn and Jeff Langseth got their start in the home goods business in 2016 by making custom furnishings. After a year of doing the show circuit, they jumped at the opportunity to open a brick-and-mortar shop in downtown Mesa. “In the summer, there are not a lot of places for makers to sell their wares, so the store started as a way to offset the slow season. But it’s turned into something so much bigger,” Dawn explains. “We support almost 40 local artists now.”

Named after the couple’s own farm and the street on which it’s located, Moon Dust’s focus is on the handmade, from delightful decor for kids’ rooms

to accessories for Fido and Fluffy—plus, Jeff’s farmhouse tables, barn door consoles, hall trees and even dog crates. Craftspersons, such as Barbara Barzee of Hound Street Boutique, Michelle Wiederhold of Twigs and Lace, Jen Western of Willa Market and Chalk Art Love’s Kathy Blokdiik not only offer items for sale but they also conduct workshops in the store’s classroom space. “We have such a supportive group of people here. It’s really nice to see them bounce ideas off of each other and help one another. That really makes a difference,” Dawn notes. (moondustfarms.com)



WOODS & WHITES

Biltmore Fashion Park is known for its array of luxury stores, but wedged between high-end brands Ralph Lauren and Davinci Luxe is Woods & White, the 3-year-old creation of former furniture restorer and upholsterer Deanna Zouari. “Showcasing pieces that are handcrafted and sourced from right here in the Valley in an upmarket location has never been done before,” she notes. “I wanted our incredible, talented designers to have this level of visibility.”

Envisioned as a blend of regional and international flair, Woods & Whites is eclectic and homey, with a carefully curated collection of lifestyle items, ranging from furniture and art to jewelry, Montessori-based learning toys, kitchenwares and more. “If you saved it on Pinterest, we probably have it,” Zouari exclaims. Some of her most popular items include rustic signs by a 17-year-old autistic artist, jewelry by a former office worker and furnishings by Valley favorite LumberLust Designs.

“When you buy a product from a local business, those dollars originated in Arizona, are spent in Arizona and are returned to Arizona,” Zouari explains. “The amount of your purchase reaches much further than just the sale at the register. It’s also providing for families, helping with education, keeping taxes down and so much more.” (woodsandwhites.us)



PRACTICAL ART

When discussing places to purchase locally crafted items, one store is always at the top of everyone's lists: Practical Art. Proprietor Lisa Olson inherited the business in 2011 from founder Jean Reddin, who opened the shop at the corner of Camelback Road and Central Avenue in 2008. "Jean had this idea that there can be functional items for your home that also bring joy, support the community and add to your quality of life," Olson explains. Over the years, she has grown the business into a Valley powerhouse, representing more than 175 creatives from throughout the state. Everything from handy kitchenwares in ceramic, wood and glass to planters, jewelry, original artworks, kids' toys, custom furnishings and even locally produced coffees and teas can be found here.

"There are just so many talented people in Arizona, so why not give them a platform, help them build their careers and let them create?" Olson asks. "There's a different level of caring about your neighbor when you know who's making the things that you're bringing into your home." (practical-art.com)

LOCAL NOMAD

"Owning a boutique has always been a dream for me," says Lauren Danuser (right), who opened her travel-inspired shop in Phoenix's Uptown Plaza in 2016. Following stints in the fashion industry in San Francisco, Danuser moved to the Valley with the hope of becoming her own boss. Knowing little about the local artisan community, she managed to develop a loyal customer base by offering reasonably priced, sustainably sourced items from independent designers from around the state and the world.

"We're a gifting shop, so we carry all kinds of home goods," notes Danuser. Local contributions include jewelry and ceramics by Tucson's Sigfus Designs and Ursula Basinger, respectively; cards and art prints by Wicker Goddess of Tempe; and skin care lines by Crane & Carbon and M+A Naturals, both of Phoenix. Arizona-made artworks, women's and kids' apparel, candles, and organic teas and snacks are also customer favorites. (localnomadshop.com)

