

Featured Artists: *Crafting Tradition, Creating Change*

2017 INTERNATIONAL FOLK ART MARKET | SANTA FE

The world's largest folk art festival, the 2017 International Folk Art Market | Santa Fe showcases the extraordinary handmade works of 160 master artists from 53 countries.

From established centuries-old traditions to inspiring innovations rooted in tradition, every artist—and every artwork—has a story. Here are six extraordinary examples of how folk artists are crafting tradition and creating change in communities worldwide.



RUPA TRIVEDI

ADIV PURE NATURE DYEING TEAM

Country: India

Medium: Textiles

In the urban Mumbai community of East Andheri, India, time-honored connections to the materials and processes that produce natural dyes for vibrant Indian silks and cottons have long been lost to the ease and accessibility of chemical colorants. In 2008, however, Rupa Trivedi, an ultrasonic engineer, set out to reclaim the power of natural plants and flowers. From a few experimental dye pots in her kitchen, she cooked up Adiv Pure Nature. The company provides social opportunity and creative education and expression for a team of predominantly female low-income workers in this densely populated corner of Mumbai, while drawing an international clientele, including dosa, Eileen Fisher, Johanna Riplinger, Anthropologie and others.

Steamed rose and indigo. Indigo and marigold. Silk marigold burst. Adiv's hand-dyeing team creates these and other exquisite natural-dyed fabrics for scarves, garments, jewelry, and more. Their flagship Temple Blessings Project is a uniquely innovative initiative in which offerings at local Hindu temples—including marigold, coconut husk, hibiscus, and rose—are recycled into dyes and materials for steamed textured prints. Before Adiv, the offerings were discarded in the sea, polluting Mumbai's sacred temple areas. Now, they are collected and sorted by elder Adiv team members, then dried and processed for use in silk and cotton textiles made by handweavers from Maharashtra, Bengal, and Maheshwar.

Adiv's on-the-job training program emphasizes sustainability and handmade creativity. Artists not only learn about dyeing and design, but about water recycling, composting, and non-toxic ecological practices. In addition to flowers from the temple project, team members utilize natural waste products, such as onion peel and coconut, from street vendors and restaurants; organic flowers from small Mumbai-area farmers; and food grade ayurvedic materials, including pomegranate peel, harda, annato, madder, and indigo. It all translates to income, health care, and other quality-of-life benefits for the Adiv team and their families.



BAT SHOP-ZENZULU

Country: South Africa

Medium: Telephone Wire Baskets, Jewelry, Home Accessories/Innovation

In the 1980s, a disparate group of unemployed refugees fleeing political violence established an informal settlement outside of Durban, South Africa. They called it Siyanda—Zulu for “we are moving forward.” The name proved most auspicious in 1994, when the BAT (Bartel Arts Trust) Centre was founded nearby. The center's BAT Shop retail enterprise offered Siyanda residents the opportunity to evolve their rich Zulu basketry tradition in dynamic new directions in artistry, product development, and marketing. By replacing natural basketry materials with more accessible recycled telephone wire, the artists wove a new tradition of bold, multi-hued baskets showcasing Zulu geometric and figurative designs. Today, their endeavor is a respected international model of innovation and entrepreneurship, and a reliable lifeline for some 150 master artists, mostly women who are their family's sole breadwinners.

Since 2000, Zenzulu™, a collection of refined, highly designed craft products, has extended BAT Shop's innovative origins. The project is a collaboration between the well-known South African designer (and BAT Shop's founding director) Marisa Fick-Jordaan and female artisans from rural and urban communities throughout Kwa-Zulu Natal. Together, they have developed contemporary basket designs that fuse both traditional and newly developed wire weaving techniques. Zenzulu's trademarked designs, along with the BAT Shop's original telephone wire basket collections, have become iconic South African artworks sought by collectors worldwide. "What remains a constant," Fick-Jordaan says, "is that human skill, invention, and handwork infuse life into their products."



CARLA FERNÁNDEZ CECILIA GÓMEZ DIAZ

Country: Mexico

Medium: Textiles, Apparel, Beadwork,
Leatherwork/Innovation

"My passion is the architecture of clothes," says Mexican fashion designer Carla Fernández. Her design purpose is rooted in childhood travels across Mexico with her father, then director of the National Institute of Anthropology and History. "These journeys familiarized me with the clothing worn by indigenous peoples in each area. I was amazed by the beauty of traditional Mexican costumes, and I decided to dedicate my life to show its contemporary capability in terms of design."

Today, Fernández and 94 indigenous artisans from communities across Mexico are together reinterpreting traditional Mexican garment materials and shapes to fit today's fashion-forward consumers. Her innovative designs illuminate materials and techniques honed through the centuries by artisans from Chiapas, Hidalgo, Puebla, Mexico City, and beyond. Whether made from organic cotton or recycled leather, each garment represents the specialty artistic practices and processes of her partner artisanal groups—including waist loom and pedal loom weaving, hand embroidery, hand cut leather fretwork, mud dyeing, wool felting, and more.

Fernández's sophisticated collections reinterpret the sophistication and geometry of traditional Mexican clothing, which involves complex systems of pleats, folds, and stitching. Her geometrically shaped tunics and dresses are trimmed in traditional *rebozo* (shawl) fabrics. Poncho pockets and trims boast applied leather fretwork. Blouses feature frontal beadwork or other strategically embroidered applications. Fernández says these transitional shapes and adornments are the result of "work with communities that ask us to develop new designs in collaboration with them."

To that end, Fernández's mobile fashion design laboratory travels to indigenous communities for textile workshops. Both groups benefit as artisans and designers exchange ideas and develop new products, an approach that has gained Fernández international acclaim for sustaining ancestral indigenous textile techniques and providing sustainable livelihoods for artists.

"The garments that we create prove that tradition need not be static, nor fashion ephemeral," Fernández says. "We only simplify the garments to be worn by a more urban customer. That allows the artisan to take less time for the same precious work in a garment so they can have more time with their families and higher economic compensation for their designs. I am sure that only through radical design can we prevent Mexican handicrafts from fading away."



ROXANA SANTOS HERNÁNDEZ DE JOJ COOPERATIVA DE ALFOMBRAS DE MUJERES MAYA EN GUATEMALA

Country: Guatemala

Medium: Hooked rugs/Innovation

The centuries-old designs of the Mayan people provide the inspiration and innovation for more than 50 women rug makers from the highlands of Guatemala. Their handmade hooked rugs, made by recycling the cast-off clothing of their North American neighbors, are preserving their ancestral artistry and building economic stability. Rather than investing in expensive wool and cotton, the women resource bales of used T-shirts, sweatshirts, and other apparel sent from the United States and sold by local vendors. These cotton fabrics are the foundation for a contemporary textile art form of imaginative and affordable hooked rugs with colorful patterns that maintain the integrity of traditional Mayan motifs.

The work of this women's cooperative has not only eliminated high material costs, it has built new market opportunities that capitalize on the global recycling movement and appeal to consumers who wish to support the movement through the products they buy. Hailing from communities where the average daily wage is less than \$6, the women's innovation and success in the marketplace has translated to critical infrastructure—window glass, plumbing, water pipes, and other vital necessities of daily life.



ENVELYN GOQOZA MONKEYBIZ

Country: South Africa

Medium: Beaded Sculptural Animals

“Since I join here, my life change completely,” says 43-year-old Envelyn Goqoza, an artist since 2003 with the Monkeybiz beadwork cooperative in Capetown, South Africa. “With the money I get from here, I support myself. Sometime, I give my mum.”

Goqoza is one of the more than 275 mostly female artists whose lives have been changed and empowered through the timeless art of South African beadwork. In 2000, Ngaka ceramists Barbara Jackson and South African ceramist Shirley Fintz founded the nonprofit Monkeybiz to provide training, materials, and employment as beadworkers for women from some of the Capetown region’s poorest townships. By providing education in the techniques, colors, and designs of traditional beadwork once crafted by community elders in the Zulu, Xhosa, Ndebele, and Sotho cultures, they encouraged young beadworkers to carry the symbols, stories, and historical narrative related through beadwork to new generations.

Today, Monkeybiz beadworkers are internationally known for contemporary 3-D sculptural animals and dolls. Crafted with the traditional technique of bead, needle, and thread, each one-of-a-kind work expresses the energy and imagination of its maker, each of whom directly benefits from sales and ongoing educational opportunities. As Monkeybiz products are exported around the world, business profits are reinvested in local Capetown communities in the form of vouchers, coats and clothing, and other necessities. Equally important is the investment in the personal development and wellbeing of artists like Goqoza, who says, “I feel like an artist. I am proud of my work.”



HUSNIYE AYDIN SOMA ARTISANS

Country: Turkey

Medium: "Oya" Crochet Necklaces, Scarves, Shawls

The Turkish word "oya," meaning lace, does not exist in any language beyond its home. But since at least the 16th century, this refined three-dimensional silk and cotton crochet embroidery work has served as an unspoken language, a secret communication of color, symbol, status, and circumstance, among women across the Turkish countryside.

In 2014, when an accident in the small mining community of Soma killed more than 300 miners, their wives decided to utilize their oya-making skills to communicate strength rather than loss. They formed Soma Artisans, a crafts cooperative, in hopes of building their art form beyond their home-based practices. Among them was 49-year-old Husniye Aydin, who sewed from home, or picked tomatoes, corn, cotton, and olives, to supplement her husband's meager mining income and care for their two children. When her husband perished in the mining accident, she joined the cooperative. She now holds the position of manager, supporting her family by connecting others to the craft's historic techniques.

Made with single strands of silk and cotton thread and a crochet needle, oya was traditionally passed down from grandmother to mother to daughter as a way to share gossip, secrets, or subjects banned from polite conversation. Today, cooperative members continue the conversation. Their necklaces, scarves, and shawls boast bold oya motifs and textile edgings that bloom in intricate floral bursts, layered with petals, leaves, stems, and stamens. Materials are stuffed and stiffened to enhance dimension, while colors are carefully chosen to communicate a range of emotions and situations. Yellow symbolizes fatigue and yellow tulips mean one's marriage is hopeless. Red shows excitement or love, while roses mean one's husband is away. Blue expresses comfort and happiness, green hope and good wishes. Tombstone motifs mean a troubled marriage, and stuffed pink tubes announce pregnancy.

Soma Artisans is now part of the nonprofit, Washington D.C.-based Anatolian Artisans, which assists cooperative members with product development, micro-business management training, and marketing skills. Their combined efforts are contributing to a revival in oya-making in Turkey and bringing worldwide recognition to the craft.