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the Crafts Report®

December 2013

The Business Resource for Artists and Entrepreneurs

Joy Stember

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26 REASONS
WHY 2013
ROCKED

Art Education

Assistants show and tell



ALPHABET SOUP

The top 26 reasons why 2013 is a year to remember—from Acquisitions to Zibbet

By Stephanie Finnegan

Acquisitions

Despite the rampant cries of “the sky is falling,” businesses are continuing to persevere and reinvent themselves. Case in point: the publishers of *The Crafts Report* (TCR). Jones Publishing expanded its roster of business-friendly and crafts-helpful titles with the acquisition of *Smart Retailer*. Carie Ferg has moved from her editorial helming of TCR to the role of publisher for both *The Crafts Report* and *Smart Retailer*, among other Jones titles. According to Ferg, “*Smart Retailer* was a great opportunity to grow our business-to-business division to now include the gifts industry, as well as the crafts industry. There are many important synergies that will result from the parallel B2B publications.”

Buyers Market and ACRE

The April 2013 issue of TCR ran two items in “Crafts News” that resonated in the industry. Buyers Market moved its 2014 show dates to January 18 to 21. This calendar conflict prompted ACRE to have to schedule its show a week later than they had previously announced. The ACRE show was pushed to January 25 to 27. According to Nancy Vince, of ACRE, “Since the other show

was showing no signs of movement with its dates, we felt the best thing we could do was to go ahead and move our show dates, allowing our industry choices.”

Tongues wagged, and insiders attributed all sorts of nebulous motives to the show dates being swapped and piggybacked. In the May issue, an exhibitor who asked for anonymity opined, “This is just a power play by Wendy Rosen against Nancy Vince.”

Denying that there were any one-upmanship ploys, Rosen, the founder of Buyers Market, explained, “People don’t understand that we were forced into this by the convention center, but the date change is finding acceptance.”

CODA Closes

In April 2013’s issue, The Craft Organization Development Association (CODA) announced its decision to suspend day-to-day operations. Citing the depletion of grant dollars, and pointing to the increased Web-based communication that negatively impacted conference attendance, CODA became inoperable. Lending out a helping hand once more, as one of its final acts, CODA donated its remaining funds to CERF+.

"Thank you to everyone who has been supportive over the years and especially those in the early years whose hard work and dedication formed the organization," Carolyn Patterson and Nancy O'Meara, former CODA board co-chairs, stated.

Digital Age Is Now!

There was no escaping the digital revolution that came to the foreground in 2013. As some institutions bid farewell due to the digital and high-tech conversions, other entrepreneurs and organizations braced for the new challenges and prepared to scale them. Photography certainly was impacted by the transition from film to digital, and the facts and the fiction behind the new state-of-the-art photographer's studio were expertly chronicled by Steve Meltzer.

In his October 2013 column, "The Practice of Practicing Photography," he shrewdly pronounced: "Digital photography seductively promises to make everyone a photographer simply through the purchase of a camera—preferably an expensive one. This is ridiculous on its face, since the only thing a digital camera actually does is get the exposure right—nothing more."

Eco-Friendly Craft Ascends

One of the themes that occurred and re-occurred in TCR for 2013 was the mantra of "recycle, reclaim, reuse." The July 2013 cover celebrated the ingenuity of *Reclaimed Elegance: Artists transform trash to treasure*. The "Crafts Scene" featured stunning works of art made from reclaimed and recycled objects. Stallions seemed to burst through walls, courtesy of Sayaka Ganz's two-piece installation made from reclaimed objects.

Cover artist Kathleen Plate, who has made exceptional strides in jewelry, lighting, and décor designs with recyclable glass, came to the environmental movement early: "People ask me when I became an environmentalist and, honestly, I didn't know that was something to become. I thought everyone had to collect tin cans and recycle them to pay for basketball camp!"

Left: Kathleen Plate's full-length dress was made of chipped red vases from IKEA.

Right: Merideth Young's Uncanny Collection was among the 32 Facebook finalists.



Facebook Cover Competition

The October 2013 issue honored the 32 finalists who strove to achieve that issue's prime cover position. Artists of all stripes and techniques entered to earn a chance to have their work featured on the October cover. After a team of experts culled 32 finalists from the submissions, the competition launched on Facebook on June 10.

Rounds of voting occurred, with each round winnowing away the competitors, until the last two standing were announced on July 4. The race to the final two had been a neck-and-neck contest all the way through—a fact that didn't escape the eventual runner-up. Seizing second place was Pamela Mattei, of DyeSigns By Pamela, Inc. In the October issue, Pamela shared: "I knew I might be seen as the long shot, but growing up in Louisville—horse-racing capital of the world, and home to the Kentucky Derby—I believed in the long shot."

Gibson and Her Gourd Art Win Big

When it was all said and done, and the votes were tallied, the winner of the Facebook competition was Bonnie Gibson, of Arizona Gourds. Her submitted piece, "Beetle Garden," grabbed the cover spot for October 2013, and Gibson was both humbled and proud.

"While I am thrilled to have won, I would have not been upset to lose to the other 31 finalists. There were a lot of beautiful pieces, and all were winners in my opinion," Gibson affirmed.





Above: Sayaka Ganz's "Emergence" installation featured two dramatic horses, "Silence" and "Light," created from reclaimed objects.

Handmade Means Individuality and Promotability

In the May 2013 issue, author Patrice Lewis offered a roundup of successful, diverse, and articulate artisans who served as cheerleaders and spokespeople on how to push, promote, and position your handmade artwork in today's marketplace.

"The Ultimate Guide to Craft Marketing" offered sage advice and strategic steps to follow to get your creations and your reputation to the forefront. From fiber artist Tara Swiger, who regularly requests her customers' involvement in her business, to Samantha Camp, of Pip & Lola's Everything Homemade, who urges craftspeople to remember that "every waking moment is a marketing opportunity," a roundtable of first-rate entrepreneurs offered their personal experiences and insight.

Internet Think Tanks Hit Strides

Brigitte Martin, author and goldsmith, founder and editor of *crafthaus*, the international online social network, also launched the Craft Think Tank (CTT). Initially begun in 2011, the CTT was a forum for movers and shakers in the crafts world to come together and discuss and strategize and share.

The exchanges and interplay were so successful that it caught the eye of the American Craft Council, with whom Martin now oversees the CTT. In 2013, the Internet think tank has come into its own. The CTT has become a place where all facets of the crafts world can communicate and deepen their connections. As Martin said in the April 2013 issue, "We aim to address issues that impact makers' lives everywhere and are working on a national action agenda for American craft."

Juried Shows? You Judge

For crafters who are fearful of being judged and having their work critiqued harshly, the magazine offered a year's worth of advice on how to present your portfolio to a juried show's panel: with photographic tips and encouragement

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on how to present yourself and your work's purpose to a critiquing panel. (And note: critique does not mean criticism!)

If you were motivated to apply to a juried show, the expense of attending it—and any out-of-state exhibition, for that matter—was masterfully spelled out by Donald Clark in the October 2013 issue. In "How to Decide if a Show Is a Go or No Go," Clark took readers through the step-by-step process of how to calculate if a show would be bankable or bank busting.

Know Your Limitations

Socrates said, "Know thyself," and the legendary philosopher was even quoted this year by photography columnist Steve Meltzer. The past year made it clear that the folks who succeeded were those who knew themselves best, and knew how to translate their personal passions and interests into their finished work.

One of the stumbling blocks for many craftspeople is the selling of their accomplishments. They can't broker a deal or get the representation they so richly deserve. In the May 2013 issue, Bruce Baker addressed this phobia in "Closing the Sale." Among the wisdom Baker dispensed, he urged readers to bear this distinction in mind: "Making beautiful work and being an excellent salesperson are two entirely different skills. If selling is not your strong point, recognize it, bite the bullet, and learn how to sell, or hire someone to sell for you."

Las Vegas Beckons

Though it still glitters and never shuts down, Las Vegas has become a serious player in the realm of crafts shows. The Harvest Festival Original Art & Craft Show enjoyed huge success there throughout 2013.

The must-go destination is a great bet for honing and establishing crafts connections, like at the upcoming Las Vegas ACRE, which will be taking over the South Point Hotel and Casino from April 29 to May 1, 2014.

Jumpsuited Elvis impersonators will be exiting the building so handcrafting artisans can make their dreams come true.

Media and Marketing

The two most stressed words for 2013 were undoubtedly "media" and "marketing," and *The Crafts Report* emphasized it monthly. An array of marketing mavens and media specialists were interviewed in the magazine, as well as penned their own informative, rule-listing articles and series.

Social media can be confusing and overwhelming. *TCR* underscored that 2013 is the year when Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram, and Facebook stopped being just kid's play. Social media has now risen to a necessity in being taken seriously as a businessperson.

In November and December 2013, Gina DeBlanco added her insight to the marketing and media blitz: "Keep this in mind: All buyers share one common habit. They are hunters and the Net is their daily landscape that is scoured. Therefore, your audience is ever present—you just need to get their attention." (A third part of DeBlanco's series will be appearing in 2014.)

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NY NOW

The gift show formerly known as New York International Gift Fair became NY NOW in the summer of 2013. Billing itself as the “Market for Home & Lifestyle,” NY NOW repositioned itself into four broad market collections: Home, Lifestyle, Handmade, and New. Handmade represented all home and lifestyle categories crafted in all types of media, with distinct groupings of designer-makers and global import resources.

Also during 2013, Handmade debuted a new logo, which made its appearance in August. The “Handmade in the USA” logo was commissioned by a partnership between NY NOW and the Craft Retailers and Artists for Tomorrow (CRAFT).

Orlando Ovations

Known for Disney World, Universal’s Harry Potter, and Shamu, Orlando will now be surfacing as a crafts destination. In 2013, Artegon Orlando began its campaign to invite craftspeople to its “Showcase to the World.” Artegon aspires to present artists, crafters, artisans, emerging artists, gallery owners, and iconic retail brands amid custom-designed interior space. Aiming to be a cross between NY’s Chelsea Markets and Istanbul’s Grand Bazaar, 200 artisans will sell their wares in kiosks, stands, and stores. Items will run the gamut from hand-dipped candles to mouth-blown glass to jars of jam.

People to Watch

The scoop on who would be making headlines in 2013 and beyond was provided by the April article “9 People to Watch in 2013.” The newsmakers who were saluted in this piece were Amy Amdur, founder of Amdur Productions; Bruce Baker, columnist, artist, juror; Brigitte Martin, founder and organizer of the Craft Think Tank; Rebecca Mercado, show director of the Buyers Market of American Craft; Donna Milstein, owner of Hanson Galleries and vice president, education, for CRAFT; Perry Price, director of education, American Craft Council; Ann Ruhr Pifer, owner of the Grand Hand Gallery, board of directors of Craft in America and Minnesota Museum of American Art; Gwynne Rukenbrod, executive director for HandMade in America, glass artist, arts executive; Nancy Vince, president of Wholesalecrafts.com, Inc., producer of ACRE.

Quirky Creations

TCR’s sleek, streamlined layouts allowed for a potpourri of unique, unusual, and unexpected creations. Throughout 2013, quirky and creative work prevailed: From July’s Panda Chair made of previously used compact discs to November’s Steampunk ingenuity, made from watch gears and clock parts, breathtaking work was explored.

Whether it was a pun-inspired visual vignette by Suzanne McNenly (August 2013) or Gary Rosenthal’s Combo Menorah, featuring a delightful dreidel in Golden Gelt (December 2013), the offbeat was part of TCR’s monthly beat.

Recession Is Over, or Is It?

The stock market reached meteoric heights in 2013, but it also shed many of those gains in 24-hour news cycles. Able to be turned around by a snippet of bad news, the economy might be shakier than hopeful reports anticipated. Have the advances of Wall Street found their way onto Main Street?

Throughout profiles and show reports, artists and dealers would delve into the economy and the restrictions it has placed on their businesses. Many have used the constrictions to become “leaner, meaner” creating forces. Others are hopeful that a sunnier financial forecast blazes ahead.

Attending NY NOW’s August show, Leslie Armstrong, of Armstrong Textiles, told TCR, “This was my first time here in five years. I waited for the recession to end. . . . So far, so good.”

Star Power

Celebrities graced the pages of this year’s issues, showcasing their talents beyond the TV screen. May 2013 introduced readers to the charismatic and conversational Tommy MacDonald, the host of *Rough Cut*, *Woodworking with Tommy Mac*. The New England native showed off his down-to-earth naturalness and his extraordinary classic-furniture designs. MacDonald proffered very sound advice for aspiring entrepreneurs: “It’s not that I have a lot of self-confidence or enormous belief in myself. It’s that I don’t limit myself.”

Below: Well-known actress Angela Cartwright discussed her accomplishments in fiber arts.



September 2013 welcomed Tony Dow, TV's Wally, the beloved big brother from iconic sitcom *Leave It to Beaver*. Dow, who has worn many hats in Hollywood onscreen and off, has found his most comfortable and satisfying niche as an acclaimed sculptor: "Forget everything you've been taught about art, other than technique and history. Experiment and find your own truth and authenticity."

Angela Cartwright beamed into the October 2013 pages. The child star, who performed in musicals, comedies, and sci-fi, talked about her immersion in the world of textile arts and photography: "You need to decide when you are making art, whom are you making it for? For others or for yourself."

Textile Subtext

Art has always come in many different sizes and styles—and that's certainly visible in the prominent place that fiber and wearable art seized in 2013. Many of the submissions for the Facebook cover competition were from the world of fiber arts, and crafts shows and exhibitions have enjoyed enormous success with their fiber and wearable art vendors.

The October 2013 issue celebrated Tangible Textiles (Angela Cartwright's art.wear among them), and 2014 seems to be perched as another year where form and formfitting will meet.

USA Patrons

One of the constant struggles that a beginning or veteran crafts professional faces is the need to have a safety net of cash. This desire for a rainy-day nest egg isn't always possible. Still, craftspeople work on their art, strive to remain sustainable and able to support their families, and calculate ways to make profits.

In May 2013, an interesting article revealed a national nonprofit artists' advocacy association that helps working artists living in America. United States Artists (USA) has a Fellows program that awards 50 unrestricted grants of \$50,000 each to artists and artisans across the nation.

Venue Variety

It's not your grandfather's crafts anymore! And that point was driven home not only by what is being exhibited, but where and how the shows are taking place. At the Fuller Craft Museum, in Brockton, Mass., their Thursday-night artKitchen café events are a way to usher young people and community residents into the fold (July 2013). The American Craft Council's remarkable resource library is housed in the historic Grainbelt Brewery (May 2013). Barns, courthouses, railroad depots, buildings that had fallen into disrepair and were lovingly rescued—these are the sites where crafts were being made and presented throughout the year.

World Becomes Smaller Place

The Internet and the social media platforms have closed up the gaps that once separated all of us. With the planet seemingly becoming smaller and smaller, there are more chances for interrelated communication and commerce. Globalization skyrocketed in 2013.

No longer just a rallying cry from a handpicked few in the know, "fair trade practice" is now a social cause that is understood by and practiced by many craftspeople, retailers, and purchasers. Alice Grau, creative director of Global Mamas, was profiled in September 2013's issue and made a passionate plea for this creative and consumer choice.

Xmas Artistry and Hanukah Highlights

The holidays remain a central part of the sales calendar. In November, Donald Clark tackled the pressing dilemma of how to handle holiday pricing and the stocking of seasonal goods. The November issue also unveiled an essential Holiday Gift Guide, which proved that handmade is a key selling point and drawing factor for consumers.

In December's issue, Judaica took center stage in the "Crafts Scene." An assemblage of traditional and elegant religious creations shared space with attention-grabbing items, like "the world's most interesting seder plate." The holiday spotlights proved that no matter the economic barometer, fashioning gifts remains a hot enterprise.

Youth Quake

The August and September issues chronicled the young guns of the crafts world. Shining a light on talented men and women in their 20s and just barely past 30, *TCR* laid to rest any concerns that the crafts scene was doomed to the dustbin.

Artisans, curators, jewelry makers, marketing strategists, educators, publishers, activists—these were just some of the job titles that were fêted in the two-part series. Some of the participants—like Joey Foster Ellis and Gabriel Craig—juggled many of these job descriptions at the same time.

Zibbet

Etsy and eBay are known as destinations for e-commerce. There's a newer kid in town, too. Its name is Zibbet. Tagged on the July 2013 cover as "Get What Your Work Is Worth," Zibbet is an online marketplace that helps artisans and artists receive what their creations are actually worth. Co-founder Jonathan Peacock explained the impetus behind the Zibbet business model: "We saw the need for an alternative to eBay, as we consistently saw artworks sold at a fraction of the price they were truly worth."^{TCR}