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# Nice Buys

It's not just about where your holiday gift purchases are going—it's about where they come from.

BY CODY E. MARCROFT

Ever think about how giant chain retailers and some smaller shops can offer huge quantities of steeply discounted Far Eastern, African, and Latin American *tchotchkes*—dishware, gifts, homewares, clothing, handbags, wallets, and other colorful trinkets? Or do you try not to think about what wages and working conditions are like for what may be children who make them?

Here are some retailers in Portland who make it their business to think about it.

## CONSUMER KARMA

“Producers get Fair Trade certification, shops don’t,” says Karen Burnell, whose two-year-old shop, [Karma Fair Trade](#), is on Brighton Avenue in Portland next to Rosemont Market. “I work with the U.S.-based Fair Trade Federation. Their mission is to bring producers and retailers together. That way, I can select merchandise from their list of Fair Trade producers.” Among the wares in her shop are baskets from Bangladesh, pottery from Nicaragua, and paper products from Sri Lanka.

“Another organization monitors just food, and there’s also a European coalition, Fair Trade International...I use the Federation where I need them...making sure people I’m working with are on the up-and-up.”

For Burnell, it’s a mission against global human trafficking and slave trade. “Three quarters of [the abuse] is in labor, and one-quarter is in the sex trade. It’s not legal anywhere, but it exists everywhere. If we can battle poverty, we can take away one of the major vulnerabilities to being trafficked.”

Walk into high-volume retailers featur-

## FINDS



Edward Murigi carves wooden animals and toys at an artisan collective in Nairobi; the sale of his crafts at Ten Thousand Villages shops provides him and his family with a stable income.



Renee Garland, right, travels the world to select merchandise in person for her Waterlily, on Milk Street. She collects fabrics everywhere she goes and designs some of the pillows and garments herself.



ing international goods in the Portland area and you have no assurance they have Fair Trade merchandise, Burnell says.

“And then there’s a litmus test I use called “Free 2 work” (free2work.org), a database that grades products A through F based on whether slavery was used” in the production of that item. You can have lovely made-in-the-USA t-shirts, but what if the cotton is slave-produced? Uzbekistan is a huge cotton exporter using slave labor.”

Everything in Karma Fair Trade is “either Fair Trade or it has a cause,” says Burnell. There are leather-handled baskets from

Ghana, scarves from Nepal, and other baskets from Uganda in the \$20 to \$42 range. A soft, elegant woven cotton scarf from Guatemala is \$27. There are carved Kenyan animals starting at \$4. The shop refutes the misperception that retailing ethically has to be expensive.

“These Cambodian mermaid bags are \$18; they’re made by women rescued from the sex trade.” She sells a lot of natural lavender lip balms and body creams (\$5 to \$17) made in Nashville at a residential program for women who have been incarcerated, which provides them counseling, training, and employment. “Not Fair Trade, but

because I know where it came from and the cause attached to it, I’m good with it.”  
570 Brighton Ave. 831-4531 karmafairtrade.com

### PERSONAL BELIEF

“I heard an interview on *NPR* back in 2000 about Fair Trade,” says Renee Garland, owner of **Waterlily**, a handcraft store on Milk Street in the Old Port. “When somebody said ‘conscious trade’ in the interview, I thought, ‘that’s what I’m doing,’ trading with a conscience.

Garland’s shop, which opened in 2005, evolves from such thinking. She spends nearly half of each year in Asia gathering an array of handmade goods from local artisans.

Garland grew up in Maine, moving to Alaska after college to provide care for sled dogs. Living in a cabin without running water or electricity and depressed by the cold and shortage of sunlight, she took the suggestion of a friend to visit Thailand.

“When I arrived in Bangkok, my life completely changed,” says Garland. “I felt like I belonged. I relate to the gentleness of Thai culture.”

At the end of her second trip to Thailand, she found herself with just \$200 left to spend. “So I bought handmade chopsticks because I could buy a lot for \$200!” This peculiar, spontaneous decision was deliberate. Back in Maine, she hit the crafts-fair circuit to sell her chopsticks, paying the small fee for a table. “That’s how I got started. It was more of a project to see if I liked the buying-and-selling aspect.”

From the first, Waterlily has offered Asian handicrafts and creations from artisans Garland befriended in Maine. “I always wanted it to be a combination of handmade things here, there, everywhere. If it’s handmade with love, it doesn’t matter if it’s made in Maine, or Thailand, or Timbuktu.”

Lately, she’s been integrating her own designs. Once she’s finished collecting materials and fabrics from various parts of Asia, Garland meets with her tailor—a woman in India who works out of her home.

“I’ll have this hotel room full of fabrics from floor to ceiling, and I sit down and sketch out jackets, pillows, handbags, scarves.” Then the tailor goes to work.

Despite strides to track the origins of the merchandise she purchases, Garland recognizes her limitations. In Waterlily's formative years she considered, but ultimately opted out of, carrying strictly Fair Trade products in her line of goods.

"I work with hundreds of people, and they're not producing every aspect of what they're making by themselves," she explains. "Even hill tribes may go to a store and buy buttons for a jacket. [To label them Fair Trade], all the aspects of every item would have to be approved, and how much [money] that person made [would have to be traced]."

Instead, she follows her own moral compass about 'conscious trade. "It just means being aware of where things come from, who makes it, and sharing that information with the buyer. I'd rather give the money to a person directly making it."  
26 Milk St. 775-5459 waterlilyimports.com

**FAIRLY LARGE-SCALE**

"The first challenge is confusion between free trade and Fair Trade," says Kevin Hudson, manager of **Ten Thousand Villages** on Exchange Street. "Free trade is the antithesis of Fair Trade, and it's very misleading. Fair Trade is people getting paid fairly for work done." Hudson's shop is filled with jewelry, clothing, gifts, and accessories from around the world. "It's buying their items at a fair price—not gouging at their end so we can get a better profit margin on our end."

Sterling necklaces from Nepal, capiz shell wind chimes from the Philippines, and colorful woven baskets from Uganda are among the items that decorate the store. These imports, and all others, are 100-percent Fair Trade approved.

Hudson's is one of 80 Ten Thousand Villages shops. The umbrella organization also wholesales products to another 120 like-minded retailers. He mentions Fair Trade Winds in Bar Harbor as an example.

The organization, founded in 1946 by Edna Ruth Byler, is one of the longest tenured fair traders. Byler was inspired by impoverished craftswomen whom she encountered in her travels to Puerto Rico. She carried items back to the States where she'd sell them and then return the money to the women. This idea has turned into a global effort over the past 70 years, with Ten Thousand Villages leading the charge; the com-



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## FINDS

pany is a founding member of the World Fair Trade Organization.

“Some Fair Trade products tend to be more expensive, and that’s a market problem,” Hudson says. “We’re working to be more dynamic instead of making it one price where you can either afford it or you can’t. The more expensive item might be made out of silk, whereas another is made out of cotton or rayon.”

Ten Thousand Villages is nonprofit, with surpluses in revenue returned to artisans across the globe. The organization doesn’t wave that flag, though. Hudson describes it as a, “happy accident” people learn about when browsing in the store.

“It’s the best part of what we do, and we don’t talk about it enough, in my opinion,” Hudson says. “Our stores are very basic as far as retail goes—no ostentation.

“Not everybody can commit to 100-percent-Fair-Trade lifestyle. I don’t ever expect anybody to,” Hudson says. “Whether or not they’re committed to our cause is not the biggest draw for us. If you’re just buying [a Fair Trade item] because you like it, that’s still all right. That’s still a success for us.” 33 Exchange St. 772-9306 [tenthousandvillages.com](http://tenthousandvillages.com)

### OR KEEP IT CLOSE TO HOME

There’s an obvious way to avoid perpetuating the exploitation of foreign labor: Invest your shopping dollars in Maine-made goods. Lisa-Marie’s Made in Maine is next door to Ten Thousand Villages on Exchange Street, and she can help with that.

Lisa-Marie Stewart’s first store opened in Bath in 2003; the shop on Exchange Street followed in 2010. The shops are full of jewelry, pottery, glassware, home wares, accessories, edibles like Maine sea salt and maple syrup, and quirky things like birdhouses made from old license plates and wind chimes made from old silverware.

“I have artisans and craftsmen from Fort Kent to Kittery” says Stewart. “Being an artist and having done shows for over 20 years, I found it very important to promote what our state has...and support small, family-owned businesses.” She likes knowing her suppliers and being able to tell their stories to her customers. “Prices range from \$2 to \$600.” 35 Exchange St. 828-1515 [lisamariesmadeinmaine.com](http://lisamariesmadeinmaine.com)

Whether it’s global or local, the gift you buy doesn’t come from nowhere. If it really is the thought that counts, these stores encourage us to, well, think. ■

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A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Wayne J. Yee, D.D.S., P.C.".

Wayne J. Yee, D.D.S., P.C.

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# Plasma Arc, Laser, and Digital Dental Technology helps to Create Beautiful Smiles Often in Only One Day!

By: Marianna Gold

A smile that gives self-confidence and happiness is priceless. It can help you to start a new life, or to succeed at that interview for the job that you always wanted. Having a healthy appearance is a quality of life issue that can affect how others see and judge us, and how we see ourselves.

Obtaining High Quality Aesthetic (Cosmetic) Dentistry is easier to achieve than you may think. Just doing a professional 4 session Plasma Arc Bleaching is sometimes all that is needed to brighten a smile. And with today's Laser and ultrasonic filling technology you can in most cases totally avoid local anesthesia using needles. No more pain or hours of numbness. For Crowns the process of Digital Dentistry uses a Computer that guides a porcelain milling robot into the fabrication of custom designed and precisely fitted cosmetic teeth. Crowns/Laminates that could take several weeks to make can now be completed in as little as 1.5 hours.

The following photos were taken of an actual case completed in the office using Computer Assisted Design (CAD), and Computer Automated Milling (CAM) techniques. Temporaries that could easily fall off were not needed. This entire crown case was completed from start to finish in only One Day. Laser white fillings required less than 3 minutes per tooth because no wait time is needed for the patient to get numb. Plasma Arc bleaching helped to balance the colors prior to the start of treatment.



### Will people know?

After this "Dental Make Over," few (even close friends) recognized what was done. But they all knew that the patient looked a lot better, and appeared healthier. This phenomena occurs because in conversations people focus more upon each other's eyes -- the teeth are not typically noticed as the immediate source of this healthy



new look, even if within their field of view.

But if the smile looks too white, or too flat, or too perfect the secret is given away and it draws attention immediately to the teeth; in which case they would appear fake. The secret to a perfect smile is by adding imperfections, but in the way that Mother Nature would. Look at the before and after pictures again. See if you can identify the natural teeth from the cosmetic bondings and porcelain crowns. The answer will be in next month's issue.

### A Healthy Foundation

In order to have a lasting affect, all Aesthetic Dentistry must start with quality Dental care, healthy gums, and proper hygiene. A comprehensive approach requires your willingness to get your teeth and gums into the best shape possible. This critical effort on your part will greatly increase the life of your Aesthetic Dentistry.

Having a perfect smile is really specific to each individual. One smile cannot fit all. A perfect smile is subjective to the person who wants it, and the environment in which the person intends to be in.

### Philosophy of Dental Aesthetics

"In over 20 years of Practice I have learned that the best Aesthetic Dentistry occurs only in an imperfect world. I try my best to copy and maximize the beauty of that imperfect world. Rather than trying to make every tooth geometrically the same I try to lean in the direction that nature's form and function takes me; unique to each individual.

I purposely make teeth ever so slightly 'imperfect' with tiny chips, waves, twists, and turns, but I do so in the way Mother Nature would make these teeth. The net result is a 'perfect smile,' but not a fake smile."

-Quote by Dr. Wayne J. Yee