

This Twist is a crafty place to shop

By SARAH PLATANITIS

Go for the Twist, a two-day craft event held twice a year at the Northampton Center for the Arts, and set May 6 and 7. Think Paradise City Arts Festival but with a rock and roll vibe, more than 60 vendors and swag bags so coveted that people stand on line in hopes to get one.

Twist began in 2008 and is the brainchild of co-directors Lexie and Cory Barnes. It's modeled after the multi-city artisan fairs like Renegade and Bazaar Bizarre that happen in Boston, New York City and San Francisco and appeal to a culture of shoppers obsessed with fashion, home decor, vintage, and handmade goods.

"We created Twist because we saw a great opportunity to bring a wave of the new DIY movement to Northampton," said Lexie Barnes.

The event promotes artisans from the Pioneer Valley and New England as well as those from New York, New Jersey, Maryland, Pennsylvania and Virginia.

"I have been as a customer, and loved it. It is a fantastic shopping experience, full of lovely things to look at," said Abby Berkson, a first-time vendor who works with stoneware and colored slips to create functional pottery with endearing and sophisticated patterns.

"Through Etsy and shows like Twist, selling handmade goods is something that can be done and more and more people see the value in them," said Cara Taylor, who shares space with Berkson at the Northampton pottery co-op, the Celadon Studio. She enjoys working on her everyday-inspired pieces with modern lines and minimal color because she feels that offers something different from what shoppers might buy in the "big box" stores.

Crystal Popko of The Popko Shop has a formal degree in sculpture but a full-time business in making real butterfly wing jewelry.

"My display is like a minia-



Photos by SARAH PLATANITIS

Florence resident and Twist participant Sharon C. Mehrman uses hand tools and traditional methods to create heirloom quality furniture and functional pieces of art. Below, a detail of her work.



ture natural history display. Even if you don't wear jewelry, you can learn a little about butterflies and get an up close view of their striking colors and patterns," said Popko. The Ludlow resident casts and fuses glass to create wearable sculpture featuring safe-origin (butterflies are raised in conservation to their full lives) butterfly wings, birch bark and leaves.

Maeg Yosef, the illustrator behind Edison Rex, came back to art after a hiatus of work. Her home studio gives her the space she needs for working on distinctive art prints and embroidery, some with hedgehogs, narwhals and antlers, but also to raise her family.

"I'm a local artist, living and working just a few minutes from the Northampton Center for the Arts. Twist lets me be out in my community, meeting new people from the valley," said Yosef.

Wilbraham native Nate Duval began hand printing rock posters after work as a creative release from his day job. Duval, who has participated in every Twist since it started, said the show gives him the push to create new work so that visitors won't see the same thing twice. His work can be seen on the national level with touring band merchandise and ad campaigns. Hatfield resident Athan

Vennell of AV Designs is a alum of the School of Art & Design of Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, N.Y., and started his leather cuff retail accessory line when he stumbled upon some leftover leather scraps from his senior collection.

"When I moved home from New York City after working in the fashion industry, I needed to, well, eat so I had to come up with ways to do so," said Vennell. Like Duval, Vennell is a Twist veteran but he's as "green" as can be.

"I'm using new and innovative ways to recycle materials. There is a nice movement going on right now but I don't think that people are re-using quite like I am. My bag line is made entirely out of recycled pants!"

For some artists like Anne Murdock of Murdock Design, Twist was the key that turned her hobby into a business.

"I received an email from a friend telling me that this hip new craft fair that was looking for vendors. I was terrified but applied and was accepted! I have been toiling away ever since."

Murdock works exclusively with natural fibers like cotton,

IF YOU GO

Event: Twist 6 craft fair

When: May 6, VIP reception 4 to 6 p.m.; shopping 6 to 9, May 7, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Where: Northampton Center for the Arts, 17 New South St., Northampton

Cost: \$4 for adults, \$2 for children ages 6 to 12 with 5 and under free. Reception, \$15.

For more info:
www.twistfair.com

wool and cashmere to create fabric dolls and products for home that will last. Her two children often inspire the color and design of her sustainably handmade goods.

"I am motivated by the concept that the things in our lives have more meaning when we know the people who make them," said Florence resident Sharon C. Mehrman, who uses hand tools and traditional methods to create heirloom quality furniture and functional pieces of art.

"My furniture and home furnishings are designed and built by me, one piece at a time, with sustainably harvested wood, to last for generations," said Mehrman, a graduate of Parsons The New School for Design in New York City.

Many of artists who show at Twist do so because it's in their own backyard

"We're thrilled by the response to the show and hope the show continues to grow, both in the number of vendors we can include and in the audience they draw," said Lexie Barnes.

The husband and wife team live in Whately with their four sons and both are hands on during the event along with interns, volunteers and Lexie's father, Gary Klaff.

"They all know him. He's our biggest help! At some point, he'll realize how much work he does and will start asking for a salary!" says Lexie Barnes.