



HANDBAG DESIGNER

**HOLLY
AIKEN**


“I travel to be inspired. It’s always fun to bring something special back that is representative of a memory and that visit.”

Step inside Stitch, Holly Aiken’s storefront at the corner of Hargett and Wilmington in downtown Raleigh, and you may find owner and designer Aiken available for a chat. “It’s always inspiring to talk to customers and hear their feedback first-hand,” she says. “Especially after a hard day, just talking to customers who love the product always gives me a renewed sense of energy to keep designing and expanding the line.”

Aiken’s customers do love her handbags. Repeat buyers abound, and retailers from Carolina to California are selling them. It’s easy to see why. Aiken’s bags are distinctive, with color and geometry and a whimsical poppy, banjo or bird-in-flight on some. They are manufactured in North Carolina of vinyl and heavy web trim, giving them a retro, racing feel and an air of indestructibility.

Creating things came naturally to Aiken, who is the daughter of a children’s clothing designer. She graduated from the College of Design at North Carolina State University, an institution she credits with instilling great design sense into Raleigh. After working for a time in New York City, she returned to Raleigh and opened her business in 2004, intent on creating uncomplicated bags that could go from playground to party.

“What inspires me most about Raleigh today is the energy created by the growth the city is experiencing,” she says. “Every week I discover a new business opening its doors, restaurants, retail shops, high-rise condos on every corner. Downtown is completely transforming itself.

“Raleigh is very supportive of its creative culture and entrepreneurs,” she adds. “It’s an awesome city.”  -NM

Find details at visitRaleigh.com/things-to-do/shopping
Learn more about Holly at visitRaleigh.com/about-raleigh-nc

Capital-Caliber Shopping Awaits

With three major malls, one of the state’s few Saks Fifth Avenue stores and a number of distinct retail districts, Raleigh has a venue for almost every shopping style.

UNIQUE SHOPPING

For a historic vibe, head to **City Market**, where lamp-lit cobblestone streets connect shops, bars and restaurants. More shopping history is found every weekend at the N.C. State Fairgrounds’ 45-year-running **Raleigh Flea Market**, with 600-plus vendors selling furniture, crafts, jewelry and odds-and-ends. Full of charm, **Cameron Village** spans six city blocks with restaurants and boutiques. **North Hills** is the place to find something for everyone, from a bowling lounge and movie theater to bars, eateries, art galleries and upscale shopping. **Lafayette Village** in North Raleigh offers French-themed structures that include locally-owned specialty shops and restaurants with international flavor.

