

# Stationery

FALL 2015

TRENDS

GOOD THINGS HAPPEN



WRITE IT  
DOWN

MAKE IT  
HAPPEN

The  
*Design*  
Issue

TO THOSE WHO HUSTLE

The resource for greeting cards,  
gifts and all things stationery



Welcome to the stylish Barque of Lubbock, Texas, a treasure trove of carefully curated stationery and gifts, made all the more irresistible when presented in vintage fixtures and on chalkboard walls.

All photographs courtesy of Linda McMillan Photography.



ROOTED IN  
*Creativity*

ST'S STATIONER OF THE YEAR WINNER REINVENTED THE SHOP SHE WORKED IN YEARS AGO

BY REGINA MOLARO  
SPECIAL TO STATIONERY TRENDS





“**F**or me, creativity comes naturally, so why not share it?” inquired Kandice Matsler. She is the buyer, designer and owner of Barque, which celebrates paper, gifts and puppy love — and also took top honors as fifth annual Stationer of the Year.

The Lubbock, Texas, shop, which traces its history back nearly 30 years, was formerly called Calligraphy Etc., focusing on bridal items and wedding invitations. Matsler worked at the shop during college, and her stint ignited her passion for all things paper.

After graduating, Matsler left Calligraphy Etc., for a customer service position at a Dallas invitation company, where she’d eventually become creative director. In 2008, Matsler had an opportunity to purchase Calligraphy Etc.

Although the store had a long history, many people weren’t sure of its focus; some thought it offered calligraphy lessons. So Matsler infused it with her own aesthetic. In 2014, she changed the name to Barque, spelling it with “que” as a nod to the French. “Barque” also alludes to paper, made from tree bark.

It also sounds like “bark.” Matsler is a dog lover who welcomes friendly pups into the shop. Her dog Lucy occasionally greets customers, but her other pup Linus is still learning shop manners.

## QUICK Q&A · KANDICE MATSLER ·



**Q.** *There are some things that are timeless — a little black dress or the perfect martini come to mind. What epitomizes “timeless” for you when it comes to stationery?*

**A.** A simple, letterpress personalized flat note.

**Q.** *With new stationery designers cropping up daily, how do you recognize the talented entrepreneurs among the hobbyists?*

**A.** We partner with other businesses that work like we do, so it’s all about efficiency and customer service.

**Q.** *What are your top-selling vendors?*

**A.** Barque, Jon Hart Design, Voluspa and William Arthur.

**Q.** *What have you learned about running a stationery business that’s surprised you?*

**A.** Even in this age of technology, paper isn’t going out of style. For every person who prefers to send an evite or ecard, there’s at least one or two more who would rather send mail that can be felt and appreciated.

**Q.** *If you were a stationery product, what would you be?*

**A.** A punny Valentine’s Day card like the ones I’ve designed. I collect vintage ones—my favorites have clever or witty phrases with literal graphics.

**Q.** *What is the best buy under \$50?*

**A.** Barque’s customized boxed initial notecards, 20 for \$16.

**Q.** *What is your best splurge?*

**A.** A Haute Papier gift set, 25 letterpress note cards with colored envelopes for \$105.





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Barque's cosy space welcomes shoppers to take a closer look at its enticing offerings. Clockwise from top: Greeting card top sellers are Emily McDowell, Ladyfingers Letterpress and Sapling Press. Gift tags designed in-house are cleverly merchandised from nails in a frame. The texture of weathered and well-loved antiques provides a great backdrop for gift and stationery offerings. The success of Matsler's in-house Valentines have led her to begin wholesaling them to other boutiques.

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## LOCAL CHARM

Measuring 2,475 square feet, Barque boasts a warm, creative interior. It features a mélange of textures, from reclaimed wood to slightly rusted metal displays and a magnetic chalk wall for displaying invitations. Several are antiques.

“We love when our customers feel inspired, so we’re constantly changing the displays and adding antiques,” explained Matsler. “It gives Barque character and makes every experience unique.”

Local women aged 25 to 55 are the shop’s focus. Inside, they’ll discover not just paper, but candles, monogrammed items, party accessories, jewelry and kitchen items. There’s also enticing gifts for babies, children and dogs, as well as seasonal merchandise. Last year, paper accounted for 71 percent of sales, while gift items represented 23 percent and wedding invitations, 6 percent.

Beyond attending AmericasMart Atlanta and National Stationery Show, Matsler scours magazines, follows trade show hashtags and asks customers to share favorite brands.

Retail prices range from \$0.65 for bakery dog treats to \$24 for doggie birthday cakes, \$3 to \$10 for greeting cards, \$.75 to \$10 each for invitations designed in-house and \$3 to \$45 per invitation suite (or more) for other wedding invitations. Gourmet gifts range from \$14 to \$330 for a Le Creuset Dutch oven. Dog finds fetch from \$16 for breed-specific stationery to \$160 for a hemp bed.

In stationery, the shop carries popular brands such as Embossed Graphics, Crane and Rifle Paper Co. Greeting card leaders include Emily McDowell, Ladyfingers Letterpress and Sapling Press. As for wedding invitations, it’s Smock, William Arthur, Crane, Envelopments and Carlson Craft.

Matsler’s own designs make up about 10 percent of boxed invitations and a significant amount of custom invitations and stationery. She also designs folded thank-yous and two styles of ‘grab and go’ options, which include simple ivory notes embellished with a black initial as well as colorful A6 flat notes. Customers love gifting them paired with a Le Pen — often embellished with a fancy ribbon and a gift tag.

It’s always rewarding to make personal connections. A customer hosting a birthday

luncheon once sent Matsler a Facebook message with a photo of her table brimming with Barque gift bags from nearly all her guests.

## EXCLUSIVELY BARQUE

Exclusivity contributes to Barque’s status as a must-visit destination. Since Matsler has prior wholesale experience, she’s acquainted with the design process from conception to distribution. “When I see a need for a product, I can design and produce (it), which gives me a greater margin for markup,” she observed.

Since Barque can customize paper, it creates elaborate invitations such as foil printed on wood veneer, screen printing on acrylic, laser-cut pockets and beyond.

Matsler is closely attuned to marketing and promotions. Twice annually Barque hosts a “Lemons and Leftovers” sale, creating space for new arrivals. It also hosts special events such as shopping nights for local organizations or for its most loyal customers. A “Snail Mail Club” rewards frequent card buyers with a complimentary card once 12 cards are purchased.

Matsler praises social media for generating sales. “Every time we post an item, it sells. Customers are constantly coming in to look for items they saw on Instagram or Facebook. We recently added a ‘featured’ section to our greeting card wall, so customers can easily locate the cards they saw online,” she revealed.

Instagram has proven to be a great lure for new customers. Soon after Matsler posts an item there, several often quickly sell. The staff can often guess which items were spotlighted by the response.

Fans of Barque really respond to its after-market Instagram ‘Sneak Peek’ posts. It’s a “day-of” surprise announcement that spotlights new items, but it’s only live for an hour. “Our customers have learned to tune in — they love the behind-the-scenes info,” emphasized Matsler.

Matsler often posts about her market trips and divulges details on trends she in her blog, Barque and Bite. She features recipes made with gourmet foods stocked at Barque and posts DIY entertaining tips. In the end, this Texan’s personal recipe for success has yielded delicious results. **S**



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