

# San Francisco Chronicle

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## ARTISAN AMBASSADOR

Denise Bradley-Tyson connects  
cultures via e-commerce site.  
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A necklace with  
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**Epicenter**  
Dress for  
Success  
celebrates  
10 years.  
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Hörweg  
soda, beer  
and more.  
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**MOROCCO**

This necklace by Jewels Studio, based part time in Marrakech, is described as "Moroccan Hamsas" (an amulet that guards against the evil eye). It's made of silver and retails for \$4,840.



**ETHIOPIA**

This necklace by Jane Signorelli is made of African amber with Ethiopian berber and a Coptic cross, and retails for \$1,095.



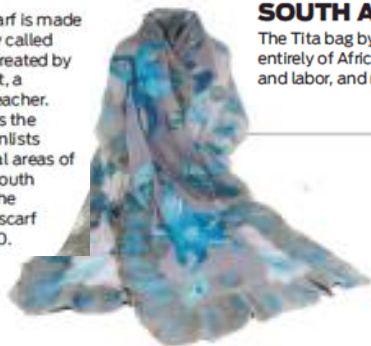
**INDIA**

This Noor meditative Buddha pin is made of onyx with diamonds and pearls and retails for \$3,250. The materials are sourced in India.



**SOUTH AFRICA**

The Tita bag by lulu K is made entirely of African materials and labor, and retails for \$139.



**SOUTH AFRICA**

This felted scarf is made by a company called Chic Fusion, created by Razaan Jakoet, a needlework teacher. Jakoet designs the scarves and enlists women in rural areas of Cape Town, South Africa, to do the feltwork. The scarf retails for \$150.



**SWAZILAND**

Quazi Design of Swaziland makes clutches with rolled paper "beads" and sells them for \$37.



**SOUTH AFRICA**

Thabo Makhetha is a South African fashion designer and founder of the eponymous fashion label Thabo Makhetha, currently living in Port Elizabeth, South Africa. Her Kobo Ea Bohali full length coat retails for \$800.

COVER STORY  
**COMMERCE CRAFTED  
WITH CONSCIENCE**

*Denise Bradley-Tyson of Inspired Luxe curates a type of cultural preservation with keen eye of a shopper, art advocate*

**By Carolyn Zinko**

Denise Bradley-Tyson has had one foot in small town life and another foot as a career woman in some of the world's bigger cities, so she knows what it's like to be outside the metropolis searching for the route in.

The native of Newark, Ohio (population 47,000), is a Stanford-educated Harvard Business School graduate who has worked as a marketing executive at Warner Bros. Home Video, and a member of the Paramount team that developed "The Arsenio Hall Show" and developed the first African merchandise show on QVC. She also oversaw audience development for "Africa Remix" in London, the largest exhibition of African contemporary art ever staged in Europe, and was the first executive director of San Francisco's Museum of the African Diaspora, to name a few stops on her career path.

Her job led to globe-trotting for work, and her love of art and shopping led to the discovery of distinctive jewelry and clothing designers flying below the cognoscenti radar.

To give them greater exposure in the outside

world, she has put her love of art and commerce together into a new online business, Inspired Luxe. Bradley-Tyson collects and curates unique necklaces, bracelets, handbags, coats and home decor from makers who are located in, or obtain their materials from, countries such as South Africa, Morocco, India and Tibet, and sells them on the website.

"Big retailers are becoming risk-averse," Bradley-Tyson said. "They're starting to carry the same products. Inspired Luxe will be a place where people can own a bit of cultural history and have fun looking good, too."

One of the more personal aspects of the website is the biographical blurb on each designer and a two-minute video in which the designer explains his or her wares. It's a bit like watching short documentaries on public TV from the armchair — a touch that breeds a connection, which Bradley-Tyson felt was important.

"When I think of this new chapter in my life, for me it's a place where art, culture and commerce collide," she said. "Part of how I chose the

artisans was based on how artfully composed the piece is, or the ingenuity that went into creating it. The stories were really compelling. And as it related to the products I selected from South Africa, the social-good component was very important in supporting the artisans and making a difference in the local community."

Bradley buys the pieces from the artisans, some of whom work for groups that put money back into local education, into HIV and AIDS initiatives or employ people with disabilities, to name a few.

"Unless there's a market for these pieces, a lot of these artisanal traditions are going to die off," she said. "I'd hate to have this wearable art die off, reduced to being behind a glass in a display case at the de Young."

Among the artisans she carries are Guide-more Chigama of Cape Town, South Africa, an engineer and self-taught jewelry artist who makes and builds necklaces of recycled glass, African trading beads and found objects such as carob seed pods; Jewels of Marrakech and Santa Fe; and distinctive coats by Thabo Makhetha, a Lesotho native now working in South Africa.

Some of the items are inexpensive, such as a

\$37 beaded clutch by Quazi Design, while others such as a necklace of Carnelian beads with a carisite and scenic quartz pendant by Jane Signorelli run \$2,795.

Call it ethnic, tribal or inspired — the jewelry and clothing on the site is often chunky, colorful and bold, and it's not for everyone, Bradley-Tyson knows. For those who want to try, she suggests a few tips: If you're short, wear something small or more delicate than if you're taller; wear bold jewelry against a monochromatic background, like a black shirt, turtleneck or dress; when layering beaded necklaces, keep them in the same color family; and if wearing layers of beaded neck-

laces against patterned clothing, choose jewelry and apparel in similar hues.

Tyson, who is married to Kaiser Permanente Chief Executive Officer Bernard Tyson, is hoping the new business takes off, but not because she has nothing else to do. She is the president of the San Francisco Film Commission and vice chair of the the tourism diversity committee for SF Travel. (Her chief operating officer, Shiree Dyson, was a curatorial associate at MoAD and was recently appointed to the Berkeley Civic Arts Commission.)

No, Bradley-Tyson, who attended Stanford on a scholarship, wants the business to flourish so that she can give a helping hand to the artisans whose work is worthy, but has yet to find a broader audience.

The business, which runs out of her home, is for-profit, and self-financed, so she hopes — through occasional trunk shows and word of mouth, that it will become profitable. If not, she joked, "My husband will think I have a really bad jewelry habit."

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