HOUSTON MUSEUM of NATURAL SCIENCE

THE STORIES BEHIND THE STEWARDS OF TREASURES FROM THE NATURAL WORLD

#### GeoWorld

#### Creating a Timeless Connection Between Humanity and Nature

This unique assortment of nature's artworks showcases ancient treasures presented as luxurious products that

are visually stunning and emotionally evocative.

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#### Heather Benjamin Jewelry

Culturally Inspired Jewelry and the Richness of Human Diversity

#### Margarita Mercantile

Tradition and Timeless Craftsmanship in Every Stitch







Store publication that isn't created merely to sell you a product, but to take you behind-the-scenes into the stories of the people who unearth, create and envision many of the pieces we source for your consideration.

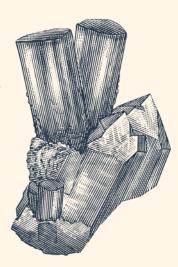
We've spent time getting to know the people behind the products, who they are, how they're inspired, why they do what they do—and we feel these stories shed light on what's important when you purchase unique, one-of-a-kind pieces. You'll know that you're supporting highly talented, intelligent, expert artisans in their crafts, that have found their passion in life and go full steam ahead on creating their vision. And you'll also know that you're not purchasing something that just came over on a shipping crate that 5 million other people will have as well.

As always, we love your feedback. What do you like? What do you want to see more of? **Email us at Elements @hmns.org**.

Join us on our voyage of discovery as we preserve and steward the natural resources Mother Earth has afforded us, engendering a lifelong appreciation for the beauty and awe of our natural world.

Joel A. Bartsch

President & CEO





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# Creating a Timeless Connection *between* Humanity *and* Nature

#### Dr. Stefano Piccini

Dr. Stefano Piccini epitomizes the essence of a visionary entrepreneur, scientist, and adventurer, devoting his entire existence to the exploration and profound admiration of nature's marvels. As president and CEO of the Geoworld Group, his multifaceted expertise extends beyond corporate leadership. Driven by a thirst for knowledge, he embarks on daring expeditions, enlightens minds as a science educator, manifests creativity as a designer, crafts captivating narratives as a writer, publishes compelling works, appraises invaluable treasures, and even graces the world of acting with his presence.

With a strong scientific background and a passion for geology and paleontology, Dr. Piccini has curated an extraordinary collection known as "Bespoke Nature." This unique assortment of nature's artworks from around the world showcases ancient treasures presented as luxurious products that are visually stunning and emotionally evocative.

With his Italian design sensibility and artistic craftsmanship, he has elevated these natural specimens to new heights of extravagance and perceived value. Each handcrafted item is a timeless masterpiece, showcasing nature's unparalleled variations. From authentic, one-of-a-kind fossils to mineral wonders, these artworks and luxury interior decor items are treasured possessions that bring the awe-inspiring beauty of nature into our homes and lives.



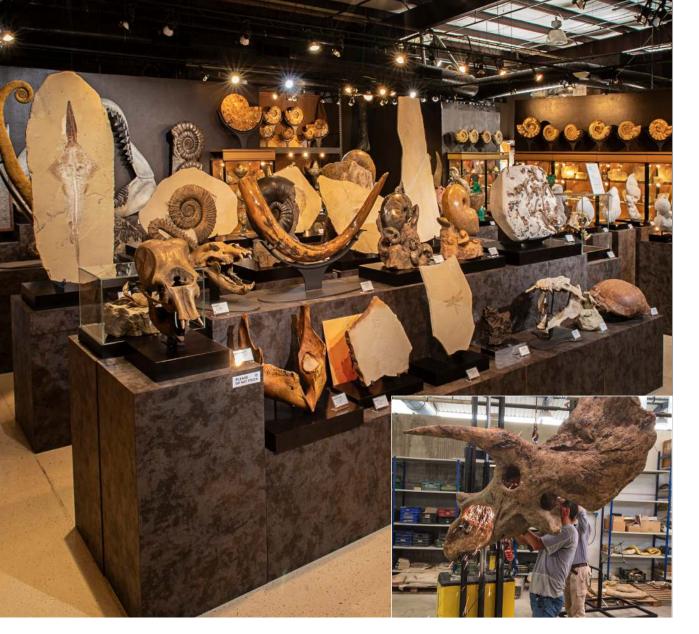




Stefano Piccini's journey began in his childhood days in Northern Italy, where he developed a love for fossils and spent countless hours searching for them in nearby quarries. Starting by cleaning and selling them in his parent's garage, he honed his passion and expertise over the years. In 1983, he founded his first company, a paleontological laboratory, marking the beginning of his entrepreneurial journey. In 1995, he introduced "The Nature Company project," revolutionizing the standardization and marketing of nature-related products like minerals, fossils, and semi-precious stones. Three years later, he established "The Geoworld Group," a conglomerate of companies with headquarters in Italy, the USA, and China. Through his chain of 40 stores in Italy and franchised concepts worldwide, he has brought the marvels of nature to enthusiasts and collectors around the world.

To curate his collections, Dr. Stefano Piccini has built a vast network of scientists and experts who work under his supervision. Together, they meticulously search, evaluate, and select the most beautiful and extraordinary specimens from every corner of the world.





Today, Stefano Piccini is globally recognized as a leading paleontologist, geologist, and gemologist. With his extensive scientific knowledge and deep appreciation for the emotional and financial significance of each purchase, he ensures that every item in his collection is meticulously selected and evaluated.

From the initial study of each specimen to the meticulous cleaning, etching, sandblasting, and polishing, every step is carefully executed. Dr. Stefano Piccini's team of designers and scientists, working under his constant supervision, ensures that each piece bears the unmistakable "Designed and Made in Italy" label, signifying its superior quality and uniqueness.

#### SHOP THE MUSEUM STORE

GEOWORLD ~ FOR FULL SELECTION, VISIT US IN-STORE

Prices range from \$50 - \$120,000 and vary by size, condition and fossil.









ruigurite, Sanara







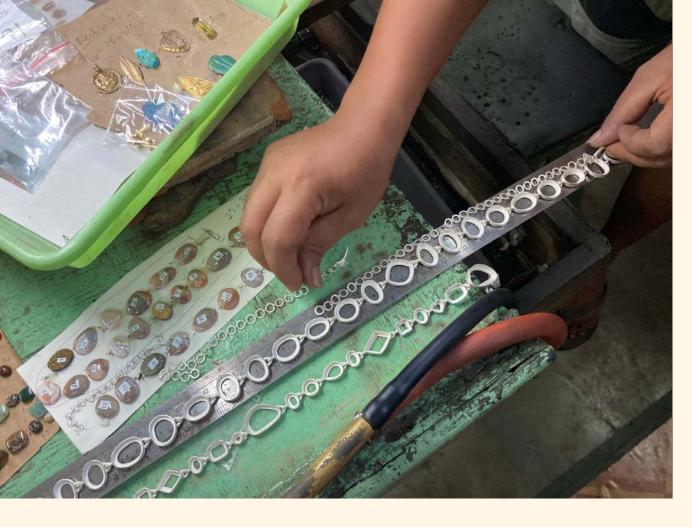


# Culturally Inspired Jewelry and the Richness of Human Diversity

# Heather Benjamin

In the realm of adornment, Heather Benjamin Jewelry stands as a testament to the power of design to honor diverse cultures and elevate the human experience.

Founded in 2002 by artist Heather Benjamin, the Heather Benjamin Jewelry stands as a fusion of innovative craftsmanship, worldly impressions, and profound symbolism.



This exquisite jewelry takes you on a journey beyond the well-trodden path, inviting you to explore the rich tapestry of rituals, symbols, and narratives discovered during the designer's global travels. With each piece, you are transported to the far reaches of the world, embracing cultural diversity, rustic elegance, and the beauty of anthropology and photography. These principles and passions infuse the brand's worldview and fuel the creative process at its deepest levels.

At the heart of Heather Benjamin's creations lies a profound connection to the natural world, serving as a conduit to pure beauty. The brand emerged from Heather's early desire to seek experiences that lie off the beaten path, leading her on a lifelong adventure of exploring diverse cultures and landscapes while making meaningful contributions to the world. Inspired by the rituals, symbols, and stories found in cultures worldwide, Heather Benjamin's jewelry is a testament to the richness of human diversity. Her collegiate studies in anthropology and photography continue to shape her perspective and creative process, imbuing each piece with a profound depth of meaning.

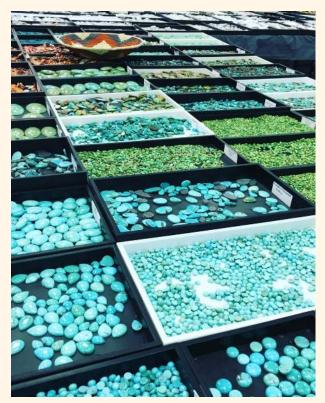
Central to the Heather Benjamin aesthetic is the traditional artisanship of Bali, Indonesia. The island, which serves as the birthplace of the line and Heather's second home, is a creative universe where her unique pieces are brought to life through a deep collaboration with her team of skilled artisans. Drawing upon century-old traditions of metalworking and consciously

sourced minerals, every piece is meticulously handcrafted around fossils, minerals, or gems. Skilled artisans in her production facility in Bali transform metal into unique shapes that bring the designer's vision to life. Each piece is a testament to the power of storytelling, honoring your individual path, essence, dreams, hopes, and direction.

Ethical sourcing is a cornerstone of Heather Benjamin Jewelry. Recycled sterling silver and sustainably harvested shells are just a few of the responsibly obtained materials that paint the palette of her creations.

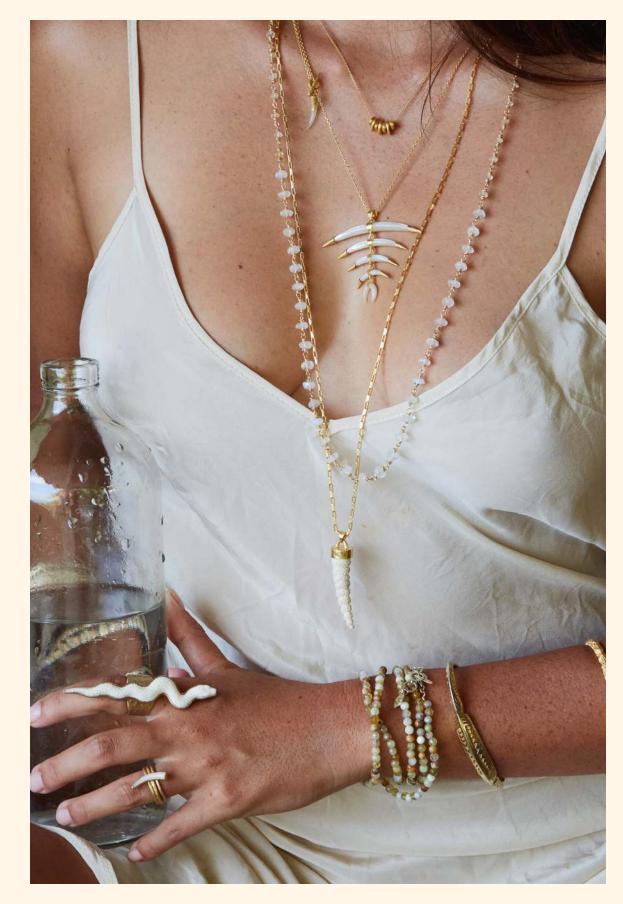
Heather's vision is rooted in a deep connection to nature, utilizing sustainable mineral metal to foster awareness and compassion for our planet and all its inhabitants. With each exquisite creation, her jewelry not only adorns but also transforms, inviting you to embark on a journey of cultural appreciation and conscious living.

With this profound commitment to conservation, Heather Benjamin sees her jewelry as a vehicle for environmental and societal change. Her brand embraces sustainable development and luxury, ensuring fair wages for artisans, providing traditional Balinese meals, and promoting gender equality at all levels of management. By prioritizing renewable resources, each collection's raw ingredients are carefully chosen for their beauty and minimal impact on the earth.





14 SHOP HEATHER BENJAMIN IN THE MUSEUM STORE



#### SHOP THE MUSEUM STORE

HEATHER BENJAMIN JEWELRY - FOR FULL SELECTION, VISIT US IN-STORE

Prices range from \$68 - \$600 and vary by size, gemstone and metals.



















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16 SHOP HEATHER BENJAMIN IN THE MUSEUM STORE





## An Odyssey of Adventurous Chocolate Flavors

#### Cacao & Cardamom

Prepare to be whisked away on an adventurous flavor journey inspired by spices and flavors from around the world. Enter the aromatic sanctuary of Cacao & Cardamom, where the scents of cardamom, cumin, coriander, and fennel intermingle, inviting you on a delectable journey through the art of chocolate. This enchanting chocolatier, born from the vision of Annie Rupani, draws upon her South-Asian heritage and extensive travels to create tantalizing flavors that elevate chocolate to new heights.

Annie's culinary exploration began during her college years when she discovered a passion for the intricacies of food. While studying at Boston University, she embarked on study abroad programs in London and Amman, with stops in Italy, Greece, Lebanon, Egypt, and China, where her appreciation for diverse cuisines flourished. A degree in Anthropology and Religion laid the foundation for her understanding of cultural traditions, while her wanderlust led her to embrace the culinary arts.

While studying for her law school admissions exam, she sought solace in books about chocolatiering, igniting a profound curiosity within her. Little did she know that her weekly respite from law school studies would blossom into a lifelong devotion to the art of chocolate. The desire to experiment with chocolate became irresistible, prompting Annie to order 30 lbs. of chocolate and a mini-tempering machine, transforming her kitchen into a messy yet enchanting laboratory.

Then, while traveling in Malaysia, Annie discovered a pastry school offering chocolatiering courses, which she eagerly attended during her time abroad. Fueled by her new passion, Annie returned to her hometown of Houston, determined to immerse herself in the world of chocolate.

On July 4, 2014, the doors of Cacao & Cardamom swung open, heralding the arrival of a chocolate haven unlike any other. With meticulous care, Annie procures the finest ingredients, including cacao, spices, nuts, and fruits, ensuring each creation embodies the essence of exceptional quality. From classic comforts to truffles, vegan options and gluten-free bon bons, Chocolate & Cardamom chocolates are made daily without preservatives to ensure freshness, quality and aesthetic appeal.

Cacao & Cardamom takes pride in crafting high-quality dark chocolate using the finest French coverture chocolate, blended with 100% fruit purees, freshly roasted nuts, houseground spices, organic heavy cream, and 82% European butter. This meticulous attention to detail guarantees a flavor impact that leaves an indelible impression.

The chocolates at Cacao & Cardamom transcend mere confectionery – they capture the essence of global cuisine, whisking you away on a culinary odyssey. Every bonbon is lovingly handmade with a dedication to freshness and uncompromising quality. From hand-painted masterpieces to airbrushed delights and paintbrush strokes of cocoa butter, a variety of techniques come together to create visual marvels that captivate the senses.



#### SHOP THE MUSEUM STORE

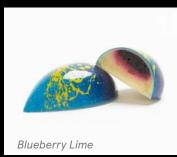
#### HANDCRAFTED CHOCOLATES - FOR FULL SELECTION, VISIT US IN-STORE

8-pc. & 12-pc. mixed chocolate sets available in-store.























# Watercolor Wonders: Revealing the Enchantment of Life's Joys

# Black Tea Café Design

Mei Chang is a multi-talented artist, illustrator, and designer who brings joy to people's lives through her enchanting watercolor illustrations. She is the creative force behind Black Tea Cafe Design, a full-service arts and design shop based in Houston, Texas.

With a specialization in watercolor and a knack for crafting unique handmade textile products, her art studio has become a hub for creativity and inspiration.







Hailing from Taiwan, Mei embarked on her artistic journey by earning a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in graphic design from The Chinese Cultural University in Taipei City. In 1997, she decided to venture to the United States, driven by her passion for art and a desire to pursue a flourishing career in the field. And the rest as they say, is history.

An accomplished artist, Mei has left her mark on various industries, including publications, advertisements, architectural sculptures, and real estate. She has garnered recognition as the illustrator of three published books: "The Way I Talk" (1995), "A Cup of Tea" (1996), and the award-winning Spanish language children's book, "Leah Ann Adopta Un Perico" (2006). Mei's talent and versatility was further established and reached a wider audience once "Leah Ann Adopta un Perico" received accolades in the 2007 International Latino Book Awards and the 2009 Mom's Choice Awards.

Mei's artistic philosophy revolves around the belief that simplicity, beauty, and high quality are the cornerstones of exceptional watercolor artwork. She aims to share the joy she finds in her craft with others, and this sentiment is at the heart of Black Tea Cafe Shop's mission. Her studio has become a haven for artistic expression, allowing Mei to fully embrace her passion for watercolor and create a diverse range of artistic products.

While her repertoire extends to various artistic mediums, Mei's heart lies in the realm of watercolor. Through her handcrafted watercolor art prints, coffee mugs, handmade tea towels, pillow covers, silk scarves, and makeup bags, she brings an array of enchanting themes to life. Her artistic creations often showcase the beauty of sea life, birds, insects, plants, and flora, providing a glimpse into the intricate wonders of nature.

Drawing inspiration from Asian culture and the appreciation of life's simple pleasures, Mei's abstract paintings bear the imprint of her experiences. Her artworks feature a harmonious blend of modern-style abstraction and captivating compositions, with her minimalist style leaving a profound impact on viewers.

With each creation, she invites us to pause, appreciate the beauty that surrounds us, and find solace in the simplicity of life's everyday moments. Dive into the mesmerizing world of Mei Chang's watercolor art, and let her creations inspire, delight, and celebrate the enchantment found in every day life.

#### SHOP THE MUSEUM STORE

BLACK TEA CAFE DESIGN - FOR FULL SELECTION, VISIT US IN-STORE

Prices range from \$6.95 - \$24.







White Flower Makeup Bag



Monarch Butterfly Stickers



Blue Texas Sticker



Bluebonnet & Butterfly Notepads



Eve's journey into the realm of jewelry began in her formative years when she would spend hours sorting through beads, carefully examining each one for its intrinsic beauty. During her college years, she honed her craft while working at a prestigious jewelry store. This early exposure nurtured her love for gems, inspiring her to become a certified Graduate Gemologist and Graduate Pearl expert by the esteemed Gemological Institute of America. Eve 's credentials speak volumes about her expertise and dedication to her craft. To that point, she has also served as the President of the Metro New York Chapter of the Women's Jewelry Association (WJA), is a proud member of the Stay Gold Collective as well as the American Gem Trade Association (AGTA), and the GIA Alumni Association.

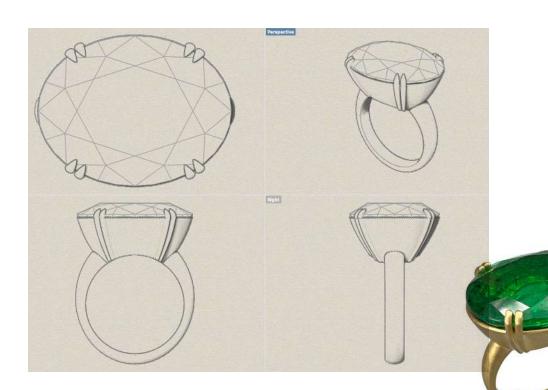
At Original Eve Designs, the language of gemstones intertwines with masterful craftsmanship, resulting in cherished pieces that transcend time. With an extensive background that includes working at esteemed institutions such as Tiffany & Co., Eve possesses a breadth of experience that fuels her passion for jewelry, history, gemstones, and craftsmanship.





"My jewelry is made to have meaning that goes beyond first glance. I pride myself on creating quality that will last a lifetime, for educating our clients about jewelry and gemstones, and always infusing every piece with meaning."

26 SHOP ORIGINAL EVE IN THE MUSEUM STORE 27



Beyond crafting stunning pieces, Original Eve Designs aims to tell meaningful stories through jewelry. From custom creations that capture the essence of two individuals falling in love to collection items that showcase the unique characteristics of hand-selected gemstones, Eve believes that jewelry is a medium for personal narratives.

Eve carefully chooses every gemstone for the Original Eve collection, delighting in the captivating narratives they tell through their distinct color patterns and one-of-a-kind silhouettes. From custom creations that capture the essence of two individuals falling in love to collection items that showcase the unique characteristics of the gemstones, she believes that jewelry is a medium for personal narratives.

Inspired by nature's landscapes and motifs, the gold forms in Eve's designs elegantly harmonize with and accentuate the

natural allure of the gemstones. The result is an artful symbiosis that celebrates the beauty found within the Earth's most precious treasures. Whether you seek to celebrate a personal connection or indulge in heirloom-quality craftsmanship, Eve crafts unique and personal stories into wearable masterpieces that are as beautiful as they are meaningful.

#### SHOP THE MUSEUM STORE

#### ORIGINAL EVE JEWELRY - FOR FULL SELECTION, VISIT US IN-STORE

Prices range from \$295 - \$9,695 and vary by size, gemstone and metals.





















# Tradition and Timeless Craftsmanship in Every Stitch

## Margarita Mercantile

Steeped in the vibrant culture and cherished memories of her childhood in Mexico, Celina Villarreal has created a novel way to share and preserve the rich traditions of her homeland. As the founder and creator of Margarita Mercantile, Celina's mission goes beyond fashion; it is a heartfelt endeavor to keep Mexican heritage alive through timeless, handcrafted pieces that celebrate the artistry of Mexican clothesmakers.



SHOP MARGARITA MERCANTILE IN THE MUSEUM STORE





Growing up as the youngest of seven children in Mexico, Celina cherished the moments spent with her close-knit family. These formative years instilled in her a deep appreciation for Mexican customs as she learned the art of needlework, crocheting, and sewing at her Catholic school in Monterrey and under the guidance of her mother. As she ventured into adulthood in America, she yearned to capture the essence of her beloved Mexico and share it with the world.

Inspired by her father's entrepreneurial footsteps, in 2017 Celina stepped away from her career as a corporate attorney and launched Margarita Mercantile. With memories of vibrant flowers, melodic mariachi music, and intricately designed costumes dancing in her mind, she sought to revive the invaluable skills and traditions passed down through the generations. Today, this woman-owned business serves as a conduit for her cherished memories and a testament to her passion for preserving cultural heritage.

"I launched Margarita Mercantile to realize my childhood dreams of following the business footsteps of my father and to share my memory of Mexico with people everywhere."

The Margarita Mercantile brand curates a captivating assortment of clothing, handbags, home goods, and accessories, all carefully crafted in Mexico. Each piece emanates the soul of Mexican artistry, exemplifying the intricate embroidery and meticulous hand-sewn details that have become synonymous with the brand. Every piece is 100% handmade and is made to last. Margarita Mercantile chooses the names of its pieces by using the names of family members, friends and apparitions of the Virgin Mary.

The name "Margarita Mercantile" carries deep personal significance for Celina. "Margarita" honors her aunt, whose infectious smile and joyful spirit left an indelible mark on Celina's life. Additionally, Celina and her daughter share the same middle name, symbolizing a generational continuation of big dreams and a passion for preserving heritage.

The collection features 13 distinct dress styles, showcasing an array of colors, embroidery patterns, and prints that are meticulously handcrafted in different communities in Mexico, including Oaxaca, Puebla, Michoacan, Aguascalientes, and the Riviera Maya. From elegant tops to versatile wrap skirts, and even charming options for children, each piece is a testament to the time-honored traditions and the skilled hands that bring them to life. The commitment to quality is unwavering, with each garment requiring the expertise of nine to ten artisans, taking an impressive  $2\,1/2$  to 3 months to complete. These are not fleeting trends but timeless fashions, lovingly made to withstand the test of time.

Margarita Mercantile not only offers exquisite traditional dresses but also contributes to the community and noble causes. They support orphans in Mexico and other organizations in Texas and ensure all Artisans are paid fair prices.

#### SHOP THE MUSEUM STORE

MARGARITA MERCANTILE - FOR FULL SELECTION, VISIT US IN-STORE

Prices range from \$20-\$200.















32 SHOP MARGARITA MERCANTILE IN THE MUSEUM STORE

# "From the very moment Ifound my first stone, I was inspired to create jewelry."

# Blending History with Artistry

### Sallyjane's Gems

Steeped in ancient origins, wire jewelry has adorned humanity for millennia. From the tombs of the Pharaohs to the dawn of the Mesopotamian Ur Dynasty some 4,300 years ago, this art form has stood as a testament to human creativity and craftsmanship. The purity of wire wrapping lies in its cold connections, eschewing soldering or heat, allowing the pieces to come alive with raw authenticity.

At the heart of this intricate craft stands Sallyjane's Gems. For more than 25 years, Sallyjane Schmoll has been weaving her mastery into every piece, effortlessly blending history, nature, and creative expression.

A true connoisseur of her craft, Sallyjane draws inspiration from history and infuses her designs with contemporary allure. With reverence for the stones themselves, her handcrafted wired jewelry showcases a splendid array of gemstones, fossils, crystals, leather, wood, and even meteorites. Yet, it is the stones that take center stage with nature's exquisite artistry brought to life in each piece. Her designs embrace subtlety and minimalism, allowing the inherent elegance of the stones to shine.

As a specialist in American turquoise, she meticulously selects stones that possess a unique allure, seamlessly integrating them into her visionary works of art. With every stroke of wire, whether round, square, or half round, each piece takes on a distinct character, forging a symbiotic relationship between metal and gem.





Each piece is a testament to Sallyjane's ability to create beauty from simplicity, and her unwavering commitment to letting nature's treasures shine. With unwavering determination, she aspires for her creations to transcend mere accessories and instead become frames that elevate nature's gems.

For example, her Western Collection is a harmonious fusion of jewelry and natural elements. Feathers, antler tips, and horns are expertly entwined within the wire, evoking a sense of untamed beauty and connection to the earth. The collection is a testament to Sallyjane's boundless imagination and her ability to infuse her designs with the essence of the wild.

Within the treasure trove of Sallyjane's Gems, over 100 handcrafted jewelry items await discovery. Each creation is a labor of love, born from her passion for collecting crystals, fossils, meteorites, and gemstones from across the globe. These one-of-a-kind pieces reflect her unwavering dedication to her craft, ensuring that every customer finds a truly unique and cherished adornment. This devotion resonates through every piece she expertly crafts.

Sallyjane's Gems is a testament to the enduring allure of wire wrapped jewelry. It is a sanctuary where history, nature, and boundless creativity converge, resulting in mesmerizing works of wearable art. Step into her world, and be captivated by the timeless elegance and awe-inspiring craftsmanship that blends history with artistry. Find a wide selection of Sallyjane's artistic creations in the Museum Store at The Houston Museum of Natural Science.

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#### SHOP THE MUSEUM STORE

SALLYJANE'S JEWELRY - FOR FULL SELECTION, VISIT US IN-STORE

Prices range from \$135 - \$4,695 and vary by size, gemstone and metals.









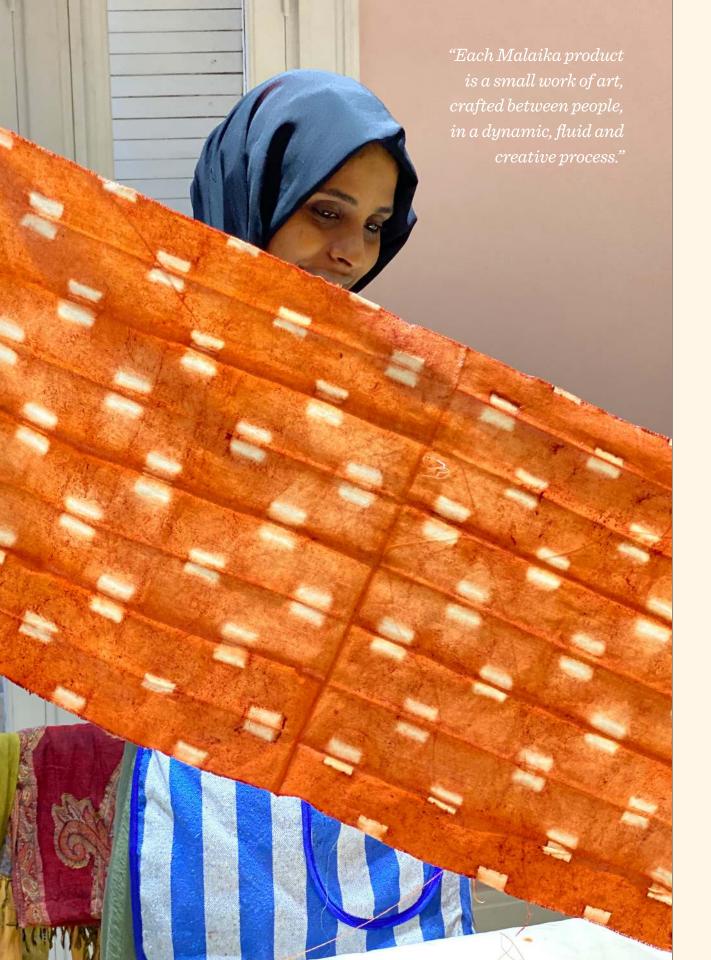














# Thoughtful Artistic Craftmanship

#### Malaika Linens

A renowned brand in the world of high-quality linen, Malaika Linens was founded in 2004 by Margarita Andrade and Goya Gallagher. Their unique journey from Ecuador to Egypt shaped their vision of creating exquisitely embroidered products while making a positive impact on the lives of underprivileged women.

Having grown up in Ecuador,

Margarita witnessed a lack

of opportunities for individuals, particularly women. Driven by a mission to change and heal the world, she was deeply affected by the hardships faced by those who woke up every day with no food, no job, and no prospects. This inspired Margarita with a simple yet powerful idea: women from diverse backgrounds, regardless of age or literacy, can learn the art of sewing. With a background in design and a passion for embroidery, crochet, and hand-drawn thread work, she recognized the potential of Egyptian cotton to produce exceptional linen that was previously unavailable in the local market. And so, Malaika Linens was born.





Margarita quickly established a facility in a picturesque part of Cairo, designed to be a bright and beautiful environment where women could thrive with a nursery on-site that allowed mothers to bring their children to work with them. Recognizing the importance of nutrition, Margarita also initiated a nutrition project to ensure that all the women and their families had access to quality, nutritious food. Thanks to the project, now 95% of the women have access to healthy meals. As part of her ongoing efforts, she plans to build a library to provide children with access to books and toys.

Margarita's love for embroidery and sewing was instilled in her by her aunt, who was a perfectionist in her craft. Building upon her aunt's legacy, she took those traits to the next level, ensuring that everything she works on exudes perfection and beauty.

At the core of Malaika Linens is a commitment to teaching hand embroidery to local women, providing them with valuable skills and opportunities for economic empowerment. The training program lasts for two months, after which the women are empowered to continue working from home. To date, Malaika has successfully trained over 1000 women.

Today, dozens of underprivileged women journey to Malaika's self-funded embroidery school to acquire embroidery techniques. Once proficient, these women return home to work, opening up opportunities for new trainees and allowing them to take control of their economic future.

In addition to their signature bedding, Malaika's range now encompasses striking silkscreen-printed accessories, luxuriously soft terrycloth bath towels, sumptuous cushions, and beautifully embroidered table linens. Each product is meticulously crafted using the finest Egyptian materials, showcasing the brand's dedication to excellence.

Malaika Linens has not only made a name for itself in the world of luxury linen, but has also become a beacon of hope for women seeking economic independence and a brighter future. Through their commitment to teaching and empowering underprivileged women, Margarita Andrade and Goya Gallagher have fostered a legacy of craftsmanship, creativity, and social change. Malaika Linens stands as a testament to the transformative power of art and the profound impact it can have on individuals and communities alike.

#### SHOP THE MUSEUM STORE

MALAIKA LINENS - FOR FULL SELECTION, VISIT US IN-STORE

Prices range from \$22 - \$340.









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# ART OF TEXAS STATE PARKS



From the rugged mesas of the Panhandle and the steep-sided mountains of Big Bend Country to the waterways of the Gulf Coast and rolling grasslands of the prairies, visitors will journey through the diverse ecological regions of Texas as interpreted by individual artists.



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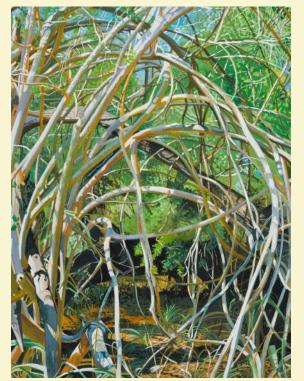




The Art of Texas State Parks book, \$40

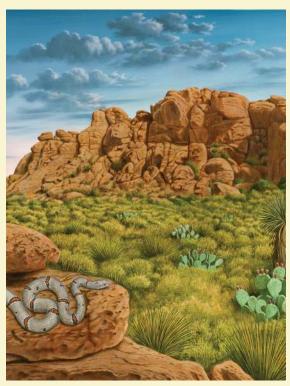


Texas State Parks First 100 Years book, \$49.95









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HOUSTON MUSEUM of NATURAL SCIENCE

