

You're not going to find this at Target.
An introduction to local artists and their crafty goodness.

There is a movement in our country. I could spend hours talking about this movement and the effect it is having on human rights, our economy, our environment and each of us. It is an awakening of consumers as we are becoming more likely to question where, how and who made the stuff we spend our money on. Buy organic, buy local and buy green are becoming mantras for many of us. And for one website "buy handmade" is another one they would like to be added to the consumer voice.

Etsy, ([etsy.com](https://www.etsy.com)) "your place to buy & sell all things handmade" connects artists with buyers in a way that resembles the fun we all have on eBay or craigslist. Instead of your typical craft fair or art show where artists have booths showcasing their creations, Etsy lets the crafters set up an online storefront. With a mission to reconnect makers with buyers and to enable people to make a living with their creative talents, Etsy has quickly become all the rage among independent artists. Over 100,000 artists have set up shop since the site's launch in 2005. The online marketplace is starting to be recognized by consumers as the place for gifts that are one-of-a-kind and have more personality than gifts purchased at big box retailers.

Etsy has several search options for helping buyers sort through all the purses, jewelry, art, home goods, kids toys, clothes, dishware, and stationary to find just what they are looking for. One option is to search by location, which is a response to the consumer voice demanding more opportunities to buy locally. A search of artists in Richmond brings up 80+ storefronts that have been recently updated. Just a quick glance and I find some artists that I already know and love. Erin Taylor Designs (erintaylor.etsy.com), Bees Knees Studio (beeskneesstudio.etsy.com) and Modern June (modernjune.etsy.com) can often be found at local events like 17th Street Farmer's Market and Spring Bada-Bing (richmondcraftmafia.com/spring.htm), and they each have blogs that paint the picture of what it is like to try to make a living by making things.

A closer look at Richmond artists left me amazed at their creativity and skills, and also forced me to pull out my credit card to place a few orders. When you've got some free time, or are in need a gift I encourage you to spend some time looking over all the local artists and their unique creations, but for now please enjoy my highlights.

Jewelry:

If you are in the market for some unique, handcrafted jewelry you will not be disappointed by what local artists are offering on Etsy. Easily the largest category in my search, it is hard to pick just one to share with you, but I was touched by one artist's ability to include her life in her creations. Adding a special personal meaning to her work, Silver Tree Art (silvertreeart.etsy.com), took extra fabric from a quilt her great aunt made 30 years ago and set it in resin to make earrings. She also accepts orders for custom pieces, which means I can have finally found a second use for my wedding dress.

Art:

In her bio, artist Sherri Conley (sherriconley.etsy.com) tells the story of how she fell in love with

photography. The prints in her shop are full of color, life and character, and are available in various sizes including standard postcard size.

Vintage:

Not only is Etsy a place for handmade items, but also vintage pieces. LaVogue (lavogue.etsy.com) is a collection of vintage clothing and jewelry, some of which the artist has added her own special touch by hand painting designs onto the fabric. Other shops like Craft Happens (Crafthappens.etsy.com), offer vintage items which are meant to be supplies for other artists, like the museum curator turned jewelry maker at Historically Inspired Design (historicallyinspireddesigns.etsy.com).

Kids:

Monkey and Me (monkeyandme.etsy.com) is a shop full of handcrafted children's designs that is best described as overwhelmingly cute.

Personalized:

Painted For You (paintedforyou.etsy.com) offers hand-painted, personalized ceramic plates and tiles that would be great for special occasions like the Mother's Day (May 11th). Also, Linney Shvede (linneyshvede.etsy.com) sells personalized luggage tags - which I plan on purchasing as a gift for a newlywed couple to use on the luggage they take on their honeymoon.

Beauty:

Jackson Sage (jacksonsage.etsy.com) sells naturally based beauty products like soaps and creams. You can even find a gentle bug repellent soap for your dog that will leave their coat soft and shiny.

Home Decor:

Rosewood Pottery (rosewoodpottery.etsy.com) is the ultimate example of being able to buy a handcrafted gift for yourself and then being able to show it off to friends when they come over for dinner. Transforming recycled glass into something amazing, Solo Glass (solosglass.etsy.com) sells hand blown glass and clocks made from vintage glass plates.

Every consumer wants to get more for their money and Etsy gives us that. We are buying more than a gift for a friend or ourselves, we are buying into an artist's dream, we are buying into our local economy and we are buying into a movement that challenges all us to question how our actions affect our community, locally and globally.