

Spring Bada-Bing

Another attempt by Richmond's very own Craft Mafia to rub out the mass produced

For nearly three years Richmonders have been hearing whispers of a new gang in town. Armed with sewing machines, paintbrushes, beads and ribbon the Richmond Craft Mafia (<http://richmondcraftmafia.com>) (RCM) is on a mission to rub out the mass produced. What started as a partnership between four of Richmond's strongest craft families has grown to over a dozen families with enough diversity and creativity to make organized craft easily accessible in the River City. Building a strong network for independent crafty business owners, members of the Craft Mafia don't view each other as competition, but as family members. Together they work day and night to create a viable alternative to our culture's fixation with mass production.

RCM's most notable effort in rubbing out the mass produced happens this weekend when they take over Plant Zero (<http://www.plantzero.com/>) for their annual Spring Bada-Bing show (<http://www.richmondcraftmafia.com/spring.htm>). Growing each year, the juried show had nearly 100 applicants this year and had to move to a much larger space. Only a little over 50 artists and designers were chosen to set up shop to sell their high quality, original handcrafted jewelry, clothing, perfume, pottery, soap, books, photography, greeting cards and more at the boss of all craft shows. The event is guaranteed to be not only a fun and inspirational way to spend a Sunday afternoon, but also a chance to get your hands on unique gifts for yourself or for the umpteen birthday parties, weddings and baby showers we all have scheduled for this spring and summer. Because they like to torture us, the Mafia recently announced this year's vendor list (<http://www.richmondcraftmafia.com/springbadabing2008/vendors.htm>) which includes artists from all over, but also many locals. So, now we can get a sneak peak of what will be showcased at this year's show, but it is only a tease that will possibly drive us a little crazy while we wait for the doors to open at Plant Zero on Sunday at 11:00 am.

It is easy to get blinded by all the frills of their designs and forget that these artists are successful independent business owners. The members of RCM not only teach us valuable lessons about living out our passionate dreams and making the most of our creative side, they are also excellent role models for anyone with a tad bit of entrepreneurial spirit in them. For RCM members, sharpening their artistic skills is equally as important as finding the self-discipline necessary to be a successful business owner. From coming up with the design and making the product, to taking orders and all the networking and marketing that goes on in between, most of the mafiosi fill every single role in their company. I honestly don't know how they find time to get all the business stuff done and still create such beautiful things to share with the rest of us. Yet, they do. Plus they find time and energy to form a supportive community that provides promotional and marketing support for other independent crafty business owners.

So, Richmonders, go to Spring Bada-Bing

(<http://www.richmondcraftmafia.com/springbadabing2008/directions.htm>) this Sunday and buy something nice for yourself or a friend, and meet the artist who put their heart and energy into bringing that creation to life. Go, and buy something unique and handcrafted. Something that supports small business owners. Something that feeds the creative current flowing through our city.