

## Rags to riches

Sick of hearing 'buy local'? Too bad.

BY MEGAN O'NEIL



Local shops offer ways to turn over a new leaf.

Holiday shopping can be something of a Sisyphean struggle — there's always one more person to buy for, one more store to run to, one last search to complete a gift. So as you run the interminable holiday gantlet this year, keep in mind that where you shop is as important as what you buy. The "shop local" mantra has been pounded into our skulls, but it will always bear reiteration, not just for keeping dollars in our community, but also for adding some fun and flair to the process of gift-buying. We're lucky enough to have some kickass local stores around, run by equally kickass people — so here's a sampling of such places to support this lovely holiday season:

**DEARBORN GLASS ACADEMY**  
**25331 Trowbridge St., Dearborn; 313-561-4527;**  
[glassacademy.com](http://glassacademy.com)

The Glass Academy is the state's only certified trade school teaching the glass arts, but if you're not interested in actually blowing (heh-heh), peruse the gallery for beautiful and delicate

glass objects d' art. Gift certificates are also available for classes and one-off workshops that introduce amateur artisans to glassblowing basics. But the real shopping deal is the Academy's annual Holiday Bazaar, which features work from more than 15 artists. And, while glass ornaments will be in abundance, the Bazaar will also feature handmade items of the unbreakable variety, such as stationery and recycled tableware. What's more, all shoppers will receive a guide that includes special coupons for nearby Dearborn stores, so you can keep the shop-local momentum going all weekend. The Holiday Bazaar is 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Dec. 6 and 7.

**DETROIT THREADS**

**10238 Joseph Campau, Hamtramck; 313-872-1777**

This small and comfy musty shop is packed asses-to-elbows with vinyl albums, vintage clothing and Detroit and Hamtown-themed wear. Buying for techno heads? Then there's no place better for electric vinyl — and rock, funk and soul are represented. The vintage selection includes clothing for men and women, as well as shoes, hats and handbags. While the frequent absence of price tags may confound new customers, most items fall in the damn cheap to extremely reasonable range. Detroit and Hamtramck T-shirts and hoodies for between \$15-\$30 could be sweet gifts for those who love to adorn themselves in hometown pride. Oddball retro items — books, pins, patches, postcards, jewelry, scarves — complete the package.

**NAKA**

**171 W. Nine Mile Rd., Ferndale; 248-582-9113; [nakastore.com](http://nakastore.com)**

Naka comes close to falling into the category of too-cute indie boutiques, those that are often full of cool stuff that

you can't think of any reason to, you know, actually purchase. But at Naka, the opposite phenomenon occurs: Is it possible to buy up the entire inventory? The shop offers a variety of handmade goods — purses made with vintage fabric, beautifully handcrafted silver cuffs, birch bark bracelets and a variety of paper goods. Naka also carries plenty of gifts for little tykes, as well as T-shirts, quirky knee-socks and platters, plates and other items for trendy homemakers. And for those who absolutely refuse to enter any hall of commerce during the holidays, Naka also offers online shopping through their website.

**KUUMBA EXPRESSIONS HOLIDAY SALE**  
**18404 Muirland St., Detroit; 313-861-2357**

A private home may seem like an odd choice for a shopping destination, but then again, what better place to find that much lauded and overhyped "one-of-a-kind" gift? Detroit artist Mildred Landrum will open her house to the (hopefully not) prying eyes of the public for the annual Kuumba Expressions holiday art show and sale. The collective, which Landrum founded, is a community of artists whose focus is on African-inspired and -themed art. The group, besides offering a supportive network for the members, aims to expose African art to Detroit residents through workshops, classes, exhibits and its annual holiday sale, which features everything from jewelry to clothing, home decor to holiday decorations — all at reasonable prices, of course. The sale is noon-6 p.m. on Dec. 15 and 16.

**THE ANNEX**

**738 S. Washington St., Royal Oak; 248-808-6843; [theannexonline.com](http://theannexonline.com)**

The Annex goes out of its way to defy categorization, which, perhaps, makes it the best place to shop for the proverbial person who has everything. The store, which opened in July, is an artful arrangement of a wide variety of high-end items: jewelry, hats, books, shoes, dinnerware and glossy coffee-table books. Disparate items are displayed together — handmade gold bracelets are arranged in glass bowls with forks, delicate headbands are placed on dinner plates. The effect is intensified by the vintage armoires that serve as display cases, and the shop's centerpiece — an old piano that showcases unusual handcrafted jewelry. Though the Annex may be disconcerting at first, it's also beautiful, and it may be the only place where you can nab a \$200 necklace made from vintage religious charms, a dashing fedora and *The Big Penis Book*. A one-stop shop, to be sure.

**NORTHVILLE ART HOUSE**

**215 W. Cady St., Northville; 248-344-0497**

Galleries are a great place for anti-mall shopping. Over the holidays, they tend to display more buyer-friendly items, which are less intimidating to indifferent shoppers. The Northville Art House's annual Holiday Art Market is no exception. Affordable gifts made by local artists are on sale here through Dec. 21. From glass pendants to ceramic tableware, the pieces are perfect for the impossible person (picky mother? conservative sister-in-law?) because it's the rare soul who'll turn up their nose at something offering a little handcrafted artistic cachet.