

[print](#)

7Stitches jewelry celebrates diverse cultures

by [LUCIA VITI](#)

06.12.17 - 07:03 am



Michelle Moore is more than a jewelry designer. Moore is an activist determined to empower the voiceless through her artistry. 7Stitches Ethnic Jewelry, Moore's Liberty Station storefront gallery and workshop, showcases the artist's handcrafted jewelry while she underscores a passion to protect the vulnerable and

transform the status quo from the "bottom up."

Working tirelessly to initiate change, 20 percent of every jewelry sale is donated to a selection of causes – chosen by the customer – Moore holds dear to her heart. Nonprofits include Cruelty Free International, Not For Sale Campaign, Polaris Project, the Women's Museum of California, Rancho Coastal Humane Society, and Outside The Lens.

Perusing through the open-spaced shop is like walking through an anthology of cultures.

Moore's ensemble of pendants, necklaces, statement pieces, chokers, cuffs, wraps, bracelets, earrings and rings, fashioned from materials collected from seven continents, connects buyers to a narrative that traverses the globe.

"A stitch for every continent – hence the name 7Stitches – incorporates as many cultures as I can in my work," she said. "I partner with vendors from around the globe. I source my raw materials from ethical, conflict-free and fair-trade environments, which is key to my mission. Pieces are traveled, ethnic and rustic, making you, the wearer, part of an amazing human journey."

Designed for men and women, 7Stitches' jewelry is incredibly unique. Admitting that "what I have isn't typical," Moore boasts of paraphernalia purchased on travels and Fair Trade Open Markets in the U.S. and abroad. Artifacts include African mud cloth, Buddhist monk beads, Tahitian Pearls, Native American leather, embroidery from Thailand's Hmong mountain tribes, Mexican trim, hand-carved bone, coral, and various fibers and fabrics. Moore even fashioned one collection from brass bullet casings found in the "heart" of a small Ethiopian village.

"I'm enchanted by material," she continued. "Open markets are a saturation of triggers – I call it brain candy – and I go from material to material looking for what others no longer use. I'll purchase what others wouldn't look at twice in places that even surprise me. I bought jewelry on a beach in Mexico, knowing that I could embellish it. I told the seller to 'Come back tomorrow with 50.' And she did, thrilled. Better yet, she was charging a dollar per piece so I gave her five. I want to elevate myself and all women so it's good all around.

"An Arizona vendor sold vats and vats – by weight – of handmade, hand pounded metal pieces from vintage Middle Eastern clothing. They couldn't wait to get rid

of what was for me, truly priceless material. It's crazy, absurd. I turned it around as a piece of culture. I give its history a life."

Moore also works with San Diego's International Rescue Committee to hire female refugees from Iraq and Africa to sew.

"I never imagined as an Israeli girl, now living in San Diego, I'd work with cool embroidery from Thailand and use refugees from Iraq and Africa to sew jewelry that's eventually purchased from a buyer in New York."

According to Moore, these refugee immigrants, now living in East County, post breathtaking stories. Assimilation, housing and labor is tenuous for most. Some rarely leave the homes they share with multiple families. While the children easily mix in with American culture in school, parents often struggle.

"I pay them well," she said. "Which is another component of my activist work. I give them pieces to thread. I don't need to speak the language. I show them what to do once and they get it. My work becomes a circle of fiber and fabric that supports all women."

Fueled by philanthropy, Moore also works with other Liberty Station residents in Partner with the Arts, a nonprofit organization that "takes responsibility to create change."

"I want to make San Diego America's first city free of slavery and trafficking of young women and children," she said. "If we can do it in San Diego, other cities will follow."

The artist, born and bred from a "small tribe" and raised on two continents touts a family tree that spans the globe. Moore traversed between America and Israel during her formative years, schooling in Fine Art. She attributes much of what she learned as adding flavor to her work.

"Travelling and living among different cultures opened my heart and mind," she said. "I've lived along the Mediterranean and travelled from Peru to India. I've met Kabbalists, Shamans, mystics and spiritual guides. I want to connect people to my travel, my search, my walk. That's why I incorporate as many artisans as I can within each component of my work."

At age 23, Moore studied advertising and marketing in San Francisco. She climbed the ranks of the corporate ladder to become a creative director in an advertising firm. Time lapsed until she decided, "If I could sell other people's work, I could sell my own." Moore moved to San Diego and opened a successful import/export jewelry business with an Australian designer who made jewelry from resin.

"Seven years later, I fell back on the idea of selling my own work," she continued. "During my years in college and in San Fran, my roommates and I made and sold jewelry that contributed to supporting our livelihood. I knew I could do this."

7Stitches was born. Moore moved to Liberty Station three years ago from a warehouse in Mira Mar to interact with artists and customers in a public setting. While she's worked with retail stores the likes of Anthropology and Free People,

and showrooms in Los Angeles and New York, she shies away from large-scale retail orders.

“I’d rather work directly with online and local clientele,” she said. “I’m not interested in wholesale manufacturing. I love the challenge of creating one-of-a-kind pieces. I have zero interest in making 100 of the same thing. I will not become stuck on a style that becomes so widely recognized, I can’t let it go. I’m without limits, but I am a one woman show.”

“Art is a constant reflection of what we see,” she concludes. “Art is a bounce, a spontaneous twist of inspiration that becomes something. I’m an artist inspired by materials that tell a story. My brand is me.”

7STITCHES ETHNIC JEWELRY

Where: 2690 Historic Decatur Road, No. 203.

Hours: Mondays to Fridays from noon

to 6 p.m.

Info: 7stitches.com, 858-336-0880

© sdnews.com 2017