

Made

in

THE

GARDEN STATE:

NEW JERSEY BRICK AND MORTARS

SHOWCASE LOCAL ART

Written by Kim Kraemer

Some art-inspired entrepreneurs lend their creative eye to curating a collection of local handmade wares and specialty gifts on a more permanent basis than their pop-up market sisters. These brick and mortar shop owners often operate on a consignment agreement with artists or makers and sometimes offer live demonstrations or DIY classes. They allow more flexibility for the artist who may choose to consign with one or several individually owned stores, freeing up their time and energy to the artistic process.

Kristen Zachares of the Eclectic Chic Boutique in Montclair and Kristen Stahl of The Local Line in Red Bank represent two ends of the “shop local” brick and mortar spectrum. Stahl planted her roots in Red Bank back in October 2017, while Zachares tested the waters with an online marketplace and pop-up events before breaking ground on her storefront plans. The Eclectic Chic Boutique brick and mortar is slated to open in July 2018.

“There is a lot of local talent that goes unnoticed because people don’t have a space to showcase their work daily. Here, we give everyone the opportunity [for retail space],” Stahl explains. The Local Line is home to more than 87 artisans whose products are also available on the shop’s website. Eclectic Chic,

in many ways, will mirror this concept. A month-to-month co-op model makes rental fees more affordable for small start-up art businesses, rather than retail sole proprietorship.

Despite a common mission, their paths to this point are quite different. Stahl fueled her desire for owning a local art-focused boutique with skills she acquired as an event planner for some of New York City’s top venues like Lincoln Center, The Met and The Guggenheim. Zachares has immersed herself in the arts since childhood, first with sketching and sculpting, then with a jewelry making business. This business allowed her to network with other artists at in-person craft shows and pop-ups. “I found that the artists I met fell into one of two categories: some who loved making their product but didn’t enjoy running a business, and others who loved to get out and sell their work but didn’t have the time or resources to do so.” A lightbulb moment occurred for Zachares, and she restructured her business from a single-artist shop to a collection of work that fit under the umbrella of The Eclectic Chic Boutique’s brand.

Given the art-centricity of Red Bank and Montclair, Stahl and Zachares knew their hyper-local handmade shops would meet a need for makers and consumers alike. But how do these play into the existing retail landscape of their respective cities? As is the case with pop-ups, creating an experience is key!

“Stores like this not only help revitalize the town and support local artists but bring smiles and joy to people’s lives. They encourage people to get out and shop, rather than shop online. Although it is convenient at times, it’s important to strengthen your community, friends and well-being,” says Stahl. Zachares agrees that while certain products are best purchased via the convenience of bulk or expedited shipping, there is a retail movement in favor of micro-manufacturers. “There’s a trend toward small and local, individual businesses with more specialized products. Blacksmiths, greengrocers and bazaars are making a comeback,” she predicts. With specialty shops, we can meet owners and makers and support them directly. There’s a



sense of warmth and pride knowing that your dollar goes back into the community.

The Local Line and The Eclectic Chic Boutique are currently accepting applications for artists to consign in their shops. For those not ready to commit to a month-long consignment agreement, pop-up markets like those organized by Marketspace Vendor Events provide alternative exposure for makers to present their work on a day-to-day basis.

 [marketspacevendorevents](https://www.instagram.com/marketspacevendorevents)



Kristen Stahl, owner of The Local Line in Red Bank, created the infamous doormat made popular by the Rook Coffee CEO.



The Eclectic Chic Boutique, owned by Kristen Zachares, will open its doors in July 2018 and will feature a curation of handmade gifts, including some of her own designs.