

Yes, I Dare To Say,
Buying From Local Artists Will Help the Economy!
An article with some shameless self-promotion written
by Kristina Malcolm.

This is a difficult article to write because not only do I have to get you, the readers, to believe me but more problematically, I have to get myself to believe me. I've been a struggling artist in Ohio for more than five years. Before that, I was a struggling graduate art school student in Oregon. Before that, I struggled in some way or another. The fact is that I had always been struggling because I believed that it was required of me. Artists will always fight the preconceived notion that they are supposed to be a "starving artist". Luckily, I am far from starving, so my struggle manifested in another way- financial destitution to prove to myself that I was truly an artist. Now that I have come to realize that I am creating this struggle, I'm going to change it. I'm going to change it by writing this article.

I'm happy to say that artists play an important role in our society. My favorite role is that of the dreamer but this article is about how artists affect the economy. So guess what? We do contribute in many ways (much to my mothers' amazement).

My second favorite role attributed to artists is that of the unifier. This role involves and affects our communities. Artists help create a sense of unity within our communities by painting colorful murals, sponsoring community art projects and clean-up jobs, and by selling locally inspired artwork, among many other things. Buying from a local artist may even generate funds for local charities. Let me use myself as an example. I make jewelry. In 2007, I developed a program called Totems. This program generates a donation for an Ohio wildlife rehabilitation or education center. The pieces, in the Totems line, generate funds, which I collect for a year and then gift to a chosen organization. This year (2009) I am sponsoring the Medina Raptor Center in Spencer, Ohio. Next year I will choose another organization to sponsor. I enjoy giving back to what influences my work the most.

Moving on, I would like to mention that I also pay my taxes. "Wonderful," you say "but how does this affect me?" My local sales tax and income tax pays for things like Police, Fire, and Emergency services. It also goes to schools, pays local city employees, fixes our roads, and keeps our communities clean.

When you buy from local artists (and small businesses), they in turn pay their bills, supporting local trash, electric, gas, and city employees. With your purchases, an artist can also invest in other local entities like local print shops, local website designers, local photographers, local food stores, etcetera (and yes, I must not forget local coffee houses, local book stores, and restaurants).

I like this quote by Michael Shuman, who wrote Going Local. "Going local does not mean walling off the outside world. It means nurturing locally owned businesses, which use local resources sustainably, employ local workers at decent wages and serve primarily local consumers. It means becoming more self-sufficient and less dependant on imports. Control moves from the boardrooms of distant corporations and back into the community where it belongs."

Need I say more? No, but I will.

My husband, Bryon found a graph on the Internet that describes how \$100 spent in a locally owned business (like artists) affects the local money stream and compares it to a non-locally owned business. The long and short of it is that more money stays in the community when it is paid to the local business. In the diagram, \$73 of the \$100 stayed in the community but when the same \$100 was paid to the non-local business, only \$43 stayed in the community. The \$30 difference is explained by the non-local businesses additional shipping costs and by them purchasing non-local supplies and services.

By supporting your local artists, you enable them to continue to be the dreamer. (Did I mention that was my favorite part about being an artist?) When you purchase works from a local artists you allow the American dream to live on. Your purchase has made a difference.

Everyone can purchase artworks. They are readily available at Art and Craft Shows, galleries (both online and locally), artists' home studios, and artists' websites. You may even find artworks at whole food stores, restaurants, bookstores, and coffee houses. Artists are especially sensitive the existing economic currents so don't think you have to be a millionaire to buy and own hand crafted works. Reasonably priced, high quality artworks are available from artists in all media, which could increase in value over time unlike pieces purchased from a box store. And don't forget that online searches and local newspapers are great resources for looking up art events close to you.

Our country is going through radical changes in our government and in our economic situation. Now is not the time to be lazy, complacent, or apathetic. Our current situation has to be changed by us, we the People of the United States. It is up to us. Do something now to help our local economy by making purchases from local artisans and small, local businesses.

I believe me. Do you?

Support your local artists and contact me, Kristina Malcolm (metalsmith extraordinaire) at fluxusmetalworks@gmail.com and www.fluxusmetalwork.com.