



MAKERS' MARK

GREENVILLE'S GROUNDSWELL CRAFT MOVEMENT AND ITS FLAGSHIP EVENT [INDIE CRAFT PARADE](#)—FEATURING THE BEST ARTISANS ACROSS THE SOUTHEAST—BEGAN WITH A MIDNIGHT EMAIL.

BY [Kathryn Davé & Heidi Coryell Williams](#)
PORTRAITS [Eli Warren](#)

"AM I CRAZY?"

It was late 2009. The word "craft" was relatively virgin, long relegated to church bazaars or kindergarten, smacking of Popsicle sticks and knitting needles.

But here and there across the nation, something was happening which had always been happening, only it was happening collectively now. People were making things. Before work, late at night, abandoning 9-to-5s entirely—suddenly, there came a swell of makers and artists returning to time-honored methods of creation. Almost simultaneously, the country seemed to wake to a hunger for things made by hand, for a sense of personal connection faded by technology and mass production.

Lib Ramos was one of the hungry, so when she tapped out an email titled "Am I crazy?" to Erin Godbey, she didn't know what it would spark. She only knew she wanted to start an independent craft festival—and she guessed Erin had the event coordinating skills to help. She and Godbey launched the very first Indie Craft Parade in September 2010. The highly-curated fair showcased handmade art and goods from around the South, with a focus on quality over quantity. Seven years in, with Indie Craft Parade now widely recognized as one of the best craft shows in South—if not the nation—it's hard to imagine there were ever any doubts about its success. But the months leading up to the festival were marked by hard work, late nights, fears, and even a few *Field of Dreams* moments. When it came time to print programs, Lib suggested two or three hundred. "I told Lib, 'No way, we need to print two or three thousand!'" Erin recalls. "And then I told her something cheesy like 'If we print it, they will come.'"

They came. Shortly after the doors opened, the line to get in stretched around the block. By the next day, they had to reuse programs. "We didn't expect the response we got," Lib says. "But Greenville was ready for it. It was the right place, the right time, and the city really came out in support." The show's overwhelming success delivered the affirmation they needed to keep going—and also the third member of their team: Jen Moreau. As co-owner of Dapper Ink, one of the first vendors at the festival, Jen recognized



BRAINCHILDREN: (from left to right) Lib Ramos, Jen Moreau, and Erin Godbey, the talent behind Makers Collective, an organization that empowers creative entrepreneurs, have weaved their strengths to create one of the best expos of craft talent in the country.

there was something special about Indie Craft Parade. She volunteered to help with the next one, and, in her own words, "basically never left."

Today, their tight, three-person team is formidable, but only in the sheer strength of their achievements. Since the first festival in 2010, Lib, Erin, and Jen—and, they would absolutely add, a diverse group of supporters and volunteers—have grown an annual craft festival into a mighty, meaningful organization that empowers creative entrepreneurs. "I couldn't have handpicked a better team to do this. Our strengths and weaknesses totally complement each other," says Erin. The fluidity of their dynamic is evident: the easy give and take, the rounding out

THE INDIE CRAFT PARADE, SEPTEMBER 16-18 AT THE HUGUENOT MILL, BEGINS WITH FRIDAY'S VIP GALA (TICKETS \$35), CONTINUING SAT, SEPT 17, 9 A.M.-6 P.M. AND SUN, SEPT 18, 11 A.M.-5 P.M. JUST \$2 GETS YOU IN THE DOOR, THOUGH YOU MIGHT WANT TO SNAG A SPOT EARLY: THE LINE HAS BEEN KNOWN TO SNAKE AROUND THE BUILDING! FOR TICKETS TO THE GALA AND FOR MORE INFO: INDIECRAFTPARADE.COM

of each other's stories—it all mirrors the effortless way they work together. Lib is creative director, Erin, event director, and Jen, community director, roles that capitalize on their distinct backgrounds and skills.

"We realized that this movement could and should be bigger than Indie Craft Parade," Lib explains. "Our first inclination was to move in the direction of education." Hosting an independent craft fair each year gave the founders a front row seat to the ups and down of small business, particularly the challenges for makers. When they saw vendors disappear or flounder, they launched Makers Summit, a creative small business conference, in 2013. It was the first conference of its kind specifically designed for makers, connecting them with professional expertise and workshops across a range of fields. This annual "business bootcamp" quickly became a key part of Indie Craft Parade's "portfolio" of resources for creatives.


"IF WE PRINT IT, THEY WILL COME."

Which brought the founders a challenge of their own. "Those Wild West years in the beginning were fun! Exhausting, but fun. Can we dream it? Can we bootstrap it? There was very little we actually said 'no' to," Jen says. Indie Craft Parade arrived just as the national wave of the craft movement washed over Greenville. Consumer interest was shifting from mass-produced to handmade. Makers of all kinds were finding their voice. And, clearly, Indie Craft Parade's growing roster of initiatives to support creative entrepreneurship was resonating. Their ideas were endless. Their resources weren't.

So in 2015, they evolved Indie Craft Parade into Makers Collective, a focused, non-profit arts organization that could serve as the umbrella for Indie Craft Parade festival, Makers Summit, and several other strategic initiatives. "Restructuring was a really good exercise for us to make sure that all the things we're doing match our mission—and that they could be profitable and sustainable for us. It felt like our organization was growing up," Lib says.

Growing up—but also growing down. "We've been asked many times to replicate Indie Craft Parade or Makers Summit around the country, but for now, we have intentionally decided to deepen our roots in Greenville," says Erin. This

decision comes as the result of the same thoughtfulness and commitment to excellence that have made Makers Collective and its events so distinct. Their philosophy is "makers first," a mantra made meaningful in big gestures (investing heavily in event advertising) and small ones (putting out a festival PB&J bar just for makers). Jen, with firsthand experience as a vendor herself, can attest to the support that Makers Collective invests in makers: "It's hard to get into the festival, but once you're in, we take really good care of our artists. We want them to succeed," she says.

Six years ago, when the founders set up tables and welcomed artisans from across the South, that's what they wanted, too. But who could have imagined the movement it would start, the businesses it would boost, the economic impact that would ripple across Greenville each year? Maybe no one, except a dreamer. 



1 LONELY MOUNTAIN METALWORKS

SHAPE SIMPLE.

THIS SCANDINAVIAN-INSPIRED, GREENVILLE-BASED LIGHTING AND DÉCOR COMPANY IS THE BRAINCHILD OF HUSBAND-WIFE TEAM JOE AND EMILY CLARK. THEIR LIGHT FIXTURES AND HOME ACCENTS ARE A PERFECT BLEND OF (HER) LOVE OF MINIMALIST DESIGN AND (HIS) PROFESSIONAL WELDING EXPERTISE. THE SPECIFIC DESIGN INFLUENCE COMES FROM HIMMELI, A TRADITIONAL FINNISH HARVEST FESTIVAL THAT WAS HONORED, IN PART, THROUGH THE GEOMETRIC ASSEMBLY OF STRAW THREADED INTO A STRUCTURALLY SOUND MOBILE THAT WAS THEN HUNG FROM CEILING RAFTERS FOR CELEBRATORY DÉCOR. BY TRANSLATING THIS DESIGN INTO WELDED METAL, THEY CREATE AN EVEN MORE SOLID STRUCTURE THAT OFFERS A MODERN AESTHETIC TO MINIMALIST DÉCOR. ONE INITIAL, SUCCESSFUL ATTEMPT LENT ITSELF TO THE DREAMING UP OF IDEAS FOR ART AND LIGHTING FOCUSING ON CLEAN LINES, SIMPLE BEAUTY, AND THE LONELY MOUNTAIN METALWORKS BRAND. lonelymountainmetal.etsy.com

CAN'T-MISS MAKERS

THERE ARE 80 ARTISANS AT THE PARADE THIS YEAR. THESE ARE OUR TOP PICKS.

2 LEANDRA HILL

BEYOND BAUBLES.

PERHAPS YOU'VE ALREADY HAPPENED BY LEANDRA HILL'S METAL JEWELRY COLLECTION AT ARTISPHERE. SHE IS RELATIVELY NEW ON THE GREENVILLE ARTS SCENE, AND SHE'S DEFINITELY SOMEONE TO LOOK FOR—AT INDIE AND EVERYTHING AFTER. HER SIMPLE, CLEAN DESIGNS ARE CRAFTED WITH CLASSIC GOLDSMITHING TECHNIQUES. THEY ARE MEANT TO BE TREASURED PIECES, WORN AND THEN PASSED DOWN AS HEIRLOOMS LIKE MANY OF THE FAVORITE JEWELRY ITEMS LEANDRA HAS INHERITED THROUGHOUT HER LIFETIME. THE JEWELRY ARTIST AND METALSMITH HAS BEEN OUT ON MATERNITY LEAVE, AND HER ONLINE SHOP CLOSED FOR BUSINESS, SO FOR THOSE EAGERLY AWAITING HER RETURN TO THE MARKETPLACE, THE CRAFT PARADE WILL BE A PROPER DEBUT! leandrahillmetalworks.com



3 J. STARK

PRIME QUALITY.

J. STARK GETS ITS NAME FROM JAMES DEAN'S CHARACTER IN *REBEL WITHOUT A CAUSE*, SO IT'S LITTLE SURPRISE THAT THE HAND-HEWN LEATHER GOODS GROUP GETS ITS INSPIRATION FROM THE ARTISAN MAKERS OF YESTERYEAR. BUT OWNER ERIK HOLMBERG'S PORTFOLIO GOES WELL BEYOND THROWBACK. HE'S NEW-GENERATION GENUINE, WHICH HE DEFINES AS "TANGIBLE GOODS OF A TIMELESS AESTHETIC." THE NAMES OF HIS BAGS AND CARRYALLS OFTEN CARRY STREET NAMES FROM INNER-CITY CLEVELAND, WHERE HIS PARENTS GREW UP "AS GREASERS, OUTSIDERS" AND WHERE PERHAPS THE FIRST BRICKS WERE LAID IN THE FOUNDATION OF HIS NOSTALGICALLY INFUSED BUSINESS. WALLET AND IPHONE SLEEVES MADE WITH HORWEEN LEATHER MEAN THEY'RE SOURCED FROM ONE OF THE OLDEST CONTINUOUSLY RUNNING TANNERIES IN THE UNITED STATES. LATIGO LEATHER, BUTTER SOFT AND UTTERLY TOUCHABLE, IS THE MATERIAL PREFERRED FOR HANDBAGS. YOU'LL BE HARD-PRESSED NOT TO FLINCH AT THE BEAUTY OF THESE BAGS. starkmade.com



BAG OF TRICKS: Straight out of Charleston, J. Stark offers loads of sleek-lined leather goods.