

COLUMNS THE GOODS

FASHION

by miss malaprop mallory@antigravitymagazine.com

REPURPOSING NOLA

In honor of Earth Day on April 22nd, I thought I'd introduce you to local eco warrior **Traci Claussen**. Her site LiveGreenNewOrleans.com brings the New Orleans area regular updates on all facets of green living here in the Big Easy. Her line of recycled products, **REpurposingNOLA**, is handmade here in New Orleans by local artists, and has garnered Traci some national attention. She was recently chosen to participate in the Entrepreneurial Challenge at The Idea Village's New Orleans Entrepreneur Week (NOEW) in late March, where she was matched up with students from the Berkeley Haas School of Business who helped her refine her business plan and marketing strategies. Judging by the way things are going so far, big things are in store for Traci and **REpurposingNOLA**! I recently caught up with her to find out more about how her business came about and what's next.



Miss Malaprop: What inspired the **REpurposingNOLA** line?

Traci Claussen: It has been a dream of mine to establish a business back here in New Orleans that could sprout into a virtual storefront from my "green" resource site, LiveGreenNewOrleans.com, which was first to provide fresh daily green news for New Orleans. The inspiration came from remodeling my loft last year in the CBD and realizing the city's "green" practices and recycling efforts were minimal at best. Like most women, I love bags and want to look fashionable even though there is a recession going on. It seems the bags that get the most attention are actually the ones selfishly designed for myself: the Eco-duffel, the HoBo, and the RE-weekender, as well as the clothing (newsboy cap and fest, boo!™ pants).

REpurposingNOLA Piece by Peace™ brand is a truly unique piece of New Orleans where we actually repurpose the "fabric of the community" into designer goods. It is my goal to offer simple, basic luxury for the fashionable recession-ista who wants to "be cool; do good" right now. There is nobody else out there doing exactly what I am doing in a unified manner with the local impact. eBay's World of Good shop contains items that are made in China and India, many under questionable labor conditions. All of **REpurposingNOLA** products are handmade, locally, from sustainable sources.

Where do you find your materials for the **REpurposingNOLA Piece by Peace™** products and how do you work with local artists to transform them?

All materials are sourced locally from PJs Coffeehouse, NOLA Brewing, and local manufacturing facilities. In fact, people are now calling me to donate vinyl banners and tents! In the true spirit of a triple bottom line (people/planet/profits), we buy salvaged wood from The Green Project, and also items like belts, ties and cosmetic bags from the Bridge House Shop to create the details on our bags. Every **REpurposingNOLA Piece by Peace™** product tells a unique story about our city.

In honor of our Mayor-Elect, during NOEW I presented my latest product (the Male Bag) to Mitch Landrieu with the natural text "clean new sound" to hopefully inspire his new venture at City Hall.

After the success using PJs burlap, I was fortunate enough to meet local manufacturers who had extra bolts of fabric from previous projects that they were happy to donate. Because all materials are donated, **REpurposingNOLA** is able to pay fair wages for local labor to help in production of my designs.

What's in the future for **REpurposingNOLA**?

Hopefully, a lot of online sales! It has been an honor to be part of the Idea Village's 2010 Entrepreneur Class and have access to great business networks and resources right here in New Orleans: the Berkeley Haas School of Business teams and all the NOEW corporate sponsors Google, Cisco, Salesforce.com, Arent-Fox legal team, who have donated thousands of hours to help local entrepreneurs gear for growth in this economy. I just keep pinching myself because it is the equivalent of having Brangelina adopt my business (although I'd settle for Brad using my Eco-duffel, and Angie carrying one of the HoBo bags around the paparazzi!) The Berkeley team focus during NOEW was to deliver an online strategy and targeted retail growth model. (Anthropologie is opening in Canal Place!) **REpurposingNOLA** is also laying the groundwork to expand into Los Angeles to fulfill West Coast orders in an effort to lower our carbon footprint, while helping LA's struggling textile industry. We are getting fantastic reviews from our customers as well as the media. It is a VERY exciting time!

Where can people purchase **REpurposingNOLA** goods?

REpurposingNOLA products are currently available online at REpurposingNOLA.com and a small selection is at Fleurty Girl at 8611 Oak Street, Branch Out clothing store at 2022 Magazine Street, and Green Serene (Lifestyle, Organic, Fair Trade boutique) at 2041 Magazine Street, all in New Orleans. ♻️



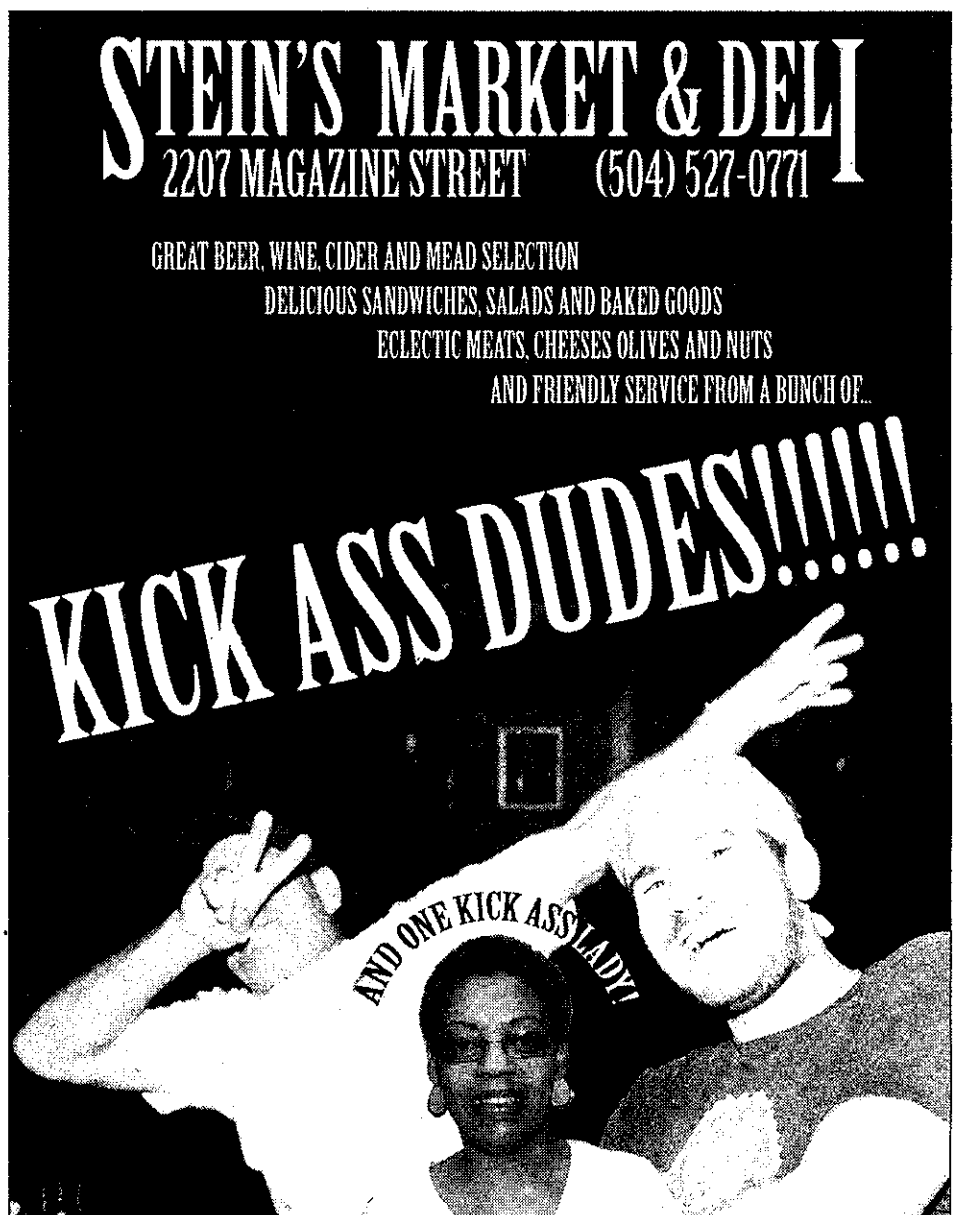
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