

# STYLE

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## Indie marketability

Red House Market gives independent designers and crafters a place to sell their work and develop their own brands

BY CATHERINE SHU  
STAFF REPORTER



From intricately hand-carved wooden hair sticks and delicate sterling silver rings to henna tattoos and wire name pendants made to order on the spot, the 30-plus vendors at Red House Market for Artists & Designers (西門紅樓創意市集) offer a wide range of items, but all of them have one thing in common — they are created and made by independent designers.

The market was launched last year by Red House Theater and takes place every Saturday and Sunday from 2pm to 9:30pm.

"Our purpose is to give indie designers and artists a place to sell their creations and develop their own brands," says Justin Hu (胡景棠), one of the market's organizers. "Anyone can have a booth here. The only requirement we have is that their items be handmade."

Many of the designers profiled here are Red House Market regulars, some of whom have been selling at the market since its launch. For an up-to-date list of vendors and an events calendar, check [redhousetaipei.blogspot.com](http://redhousetaipei.blogspot.com).

### MARKET NOTES:

**WHAT:** Red House Theater (西門紅樓)  
**WHERE:** 10 Chengdu Rd, Taipei City (台北市成都路10號)  
**WHEN:** Saturdays and Sundays from 2pm to 9:30pm  
**ON THE NET:** [redhousetaipei.blogspot.com](http://redhousetaipei.blogspot.com)

More than 30 designers and crafters gather each weekend at Red House to sell their creations.

PHOTO: CATHERINE SHU, TAIPEI TIMES

### Jos Designs (簪簪自語)



Jos Designs offers a classy alternative for women who have been using pencils, chopsticks and anything else handy to secure their hair. The brand's hair sticks and combs are hand-carved from hardwood by artisans in Taiwan. Some are also embellished with sterling

silver flowers and inlaid designs, cabochons made of semi-precious stones or handmade glass beads. "I collect hair ornaments, but I couldn't find ones I really liked, so I decided to start making them myself," says designer Jo Lin (林喬如). "I start by sketching ideas, looking at paintings for inspiration and just going on how I feel."

One double-pronged hair stick has graceful whorls inset in silver that look like the stylized clouds in Chinese landscape paintings. Another hair stick is based on the *panchang* knot (盤長結), a motif in Chinese macramé that symbolizes the cyclical nature of life and whose meaning is rooted in

Buddhist philosophy. Jos Designs uses hardwood selected for its sturdiness and beauty. The buffed surface of blue sandalwood has an iridescent appearance that shifts in hue depending on the light; the wood also has a subtle, warm fragrance. Brazilian rosewood, on the other hand, is a rich ebony color with a very fine grain.

"The more you use a hair stick, the shinier and brighter the wood becomes," says Lin. "Wood is a completely different feeling than wearing something made of plastic or metal."

**On the Net:** [tw.myblog.yahoo.com/josdesign1959](http://tw.myblog.yahoo.com/josdesign1959)

### picobaby



PHOTO: CATHERINE SHU, TAIPEI TIMES

Lo Cheng-hsiung (羅成雄) rescues discarded computers from the trash heap by turning them into cute figurines and jewelry. Lo says he was inspired after seeing similar figures on a trip to Japan. His sister works for a computer manufacturer and provides him with plenty of broken logic boards and other hardware.

Many picobaby figures have chubby little torsos made of resistors, used to control the flow of electricity, movable stubby arms made from capacitors, which store energy, and heads and legs crafted from metal

bolts, nuts and other pieces from the insides of old computers. The figures are then finished off with little flourishes like Swarovski crystal belly buttons or metallic angel wings.

Each picobaby (available as pendants, earrings, bracelets or cellphone charms) is one-of-a-kind. "I take the computer hardware, especially scraps from old logic boards, and then I put together the figures from scratch," says Lo. "At this point, I've made more than 400 picobabies."

**On the Net:** [www.picobaby.com.tw](http://www.picobaby.com.tw)

### Aishang Yezhu Zao (愛上野豬皂)



PHOTO: CATHERINE SHU, TAIPEI TIMES

Aishang Yezhu Zao's essential oil soaps come in a bouquet of colors and aromas, and each has a little surprise embedded in it: a plastic Doraemon, Hello Kitty or Snoopy figure that is freed after the soap is used up. The soaps are also fragrant enough to serve as a room freshener, with the aroma lasting as long as six months. Aishang Yezhu Zao's best-selling scent is the pink ylang-ylang, which is supposed to relax and create a romantic atmosphere. Orange, on the other hand, energizes.



PHOTO: CATHERINE SHU, TAIPEI TIMES

### EZ Studio

Horyi (何昆益) and Sandy Quan (阮淑蓉) are graphic designers who began crafting wooden figures as a creative outlet three years ago. Each figure has a flat round face with features that Quan and Horyi add using a wood-burning tool and can be personalized on the spot for free.

"Our characters are over-the-top. They have expressions that are crazy and confused-looking at the same time," says Horyi.

EZ Studio also offers T-shirts with the same characters. Other items include wooden hearts that can be

separated into two halves like best-friend charm necklaces. The series is called Happiness, which in Mandarin literally translates as "open heart" (開心).

"We like selling at the market because it gives us a chance to interact with shoppers," says Horyi. "At first glance our things might seem a bit simple, but when we tell people the story behind our characters and explain how the wood-burning process works, we hope that they develop an appreciation for our work."

**On the Net:** [www.ezstudio.com.tw](http://www.ezstudio.com.tw)



PHOTO: CATHERINE SHU, TAIPEI TIMES

### Heaven on Earth

Wendy Chou (周曉君), who recently graduated from the Academy of Art University in San Francisco, originally created Heaven on Earth as part of a master's thesis project. The artist and designer studied fashion merchandising and sees selling at Red House Market as a stepping stone to opening her own store.

Chou uses shells and wooden beads in her jewelry to evoke the ocean, as well as Swarovski crystal pendants in the shape of starfish and hearts. "Heaven on Earth was originally created as a clothing line, but then I put the concept into jewelry," says Chou. "It represents my passion for the beach and the sea, and I want people to be able to feel that, too."

**On the Net:** [www.wretch.cc/album/wendychou032](http://www.wretch.cc/album/wendychou032)



PHOTO: CATHERINE SHU, TAIPEI TIMES

### Tom Chung (鍾奉倚)

Tom Chung (鍾奉倚) is a fledgling jewelry maker, though his inspiration is gleaned from his family's 50-year-old business, which imports jade from China that is then carved by artisans in Taipei. His wares include earrings made from dangling clusters of jade beads and elaborate pendants hung from knotted and beaded cords. Chung first sold his earrings, necklaces and bracelets to jewelry stores before deciding to branch out on his own with a stall at Red House Market.



PHOTO: CATHERINE SHU, TAIPEI TIMES

### Bu Gulu and Weiyi Wuer (布咕嚕和唯一無二)

Bu Gulu and Weiyi Wuer share a stall and use fabric in their creations, but that's where the similarity ends. Bu Gulu owner Hsu Su-chiu (徐素秋) sews plump fabric owls from Japanese fabrics, while Weiyi Wuer specializes in flip-flops woven from strips of soft fabric.

Bu Gulu's fat, wide-eyed birds dangle from cellphone straps and key chains or are perched side-by-side on little branches. "In Japanese, the word for owl sounds the same as the word for lucky. In Chinese culture, owls symbolize happiness, while in Western cultures they stand for wisdom or knowledge," says Hsu. "I think they make a good gift, especially for students who are about to take a test."

### Rgrnin (耳根硬)



PHOTO: CATHERINE SHU, TAIPEI TIMES

Rgrnin's chunky bracelets, heavy rings and statement necklaces are made from objects you don't usually see in jewelry.

"We take everyday things, like buttons, poker chips, spoons or corks, and make them into necklaces, earrings or rings," says designer Wu Chi-te (吳麒德). "The idea is to give our customers a surprise. For example, we use belt buckles in bracelets."

Wu started making jewelry as a college freshman to earn money and uses items he buys from wholesale stores behind Taipei Train Station (台北車站) or finds while traveling, such as buttons from flea markets in Thailand. He is now finishing school, but plans to continue with his jewelry line. Rgrnin is a play on the brand's Chinese name and the word "organic."

"That's how my business developed over time," says Wu.  
**On the Net:** [www.wretch.cc/album/rgrnin](http://www.wretch.cc/album/rgrnin)



PHOTO: CATHERINE SHU, TAIPEI TIMES

### I Am Party

I Am Party's Animal T-shirts cast an ironic eye at the relationship between humans and animals. Artist Benny Liu (劉宜銘) studied fine art in college before moving on to graphic design, and many of his shirts resemble the "exquisite corpse" collages made by surrealists in the 1920s.

One design features a gorilla wearing horn-rimmed spectacles and a suit above the slogan "knowledge is power" in English. "Gorillas are very intelligent animals, but they get locked up in zoos by people," says Liu.

A monotone chameleon in another T-shirt looks drab against the colorful lollipop it clings to. "Chameleons change color all the time to blend into their surroundings. This one has changed so much, he's finally forgotten who he is, so now he is just black and white," says Liu.

**On the Net:** [tw.user.bid.yahoo.com/tw/user/1128821](http://tw.user.bid.yahoo.com/tw/user/1128821)