

# NICHE

THE MAGAZINE FOR  
PROGRESSIVE RETAILERS

## WINNING MOVES

Artcraft Collection Takes a  
Chance and Hits the Mark

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## NICHE 2004 TOP RETAILERS



# NICHE AUTUMN

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Ample window display space in Artcraft Collection's third gallery location allows for a vivid melange of offerings, page **60**

Bellagio's successful wearable art mix includes "Angel Wings," from Kane + Sells, page **68**



## FEATURES

### All the Right Moves

From its beginnings in a converted textile mill, Artcraft Collection has expanded to three locations, its newest in a modern glass-clad building. Lee Lawrence shares the story.

### Tailor-Made Tactics

Leery of adding wearable art to your gallery mix? Sara Jerome offers some hints from experienced retailers.

### Plug into the Senses

Go beyond straight visual impact: Gael Hancock reports on multisensory display trends from GlobalShop 2004.

### COVER

Artcraft Collection hits a high note with its newest location in Reston, Va., featuring larger furniture pieces including this Pavarotti CD cabinet, an exclusive design by Paul Carbo. Photography by Roger Foley.

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Dazzle customers with the cool waves of Dalco's curved glass unit and other sense-ible products, page **76**

# EDITOR'S LETTER

## Go Your Own Way

**W**e're all familiar with "corporate-speak," those phrases that sound official but are, in truth, empty: making sure you're "on the same page," keeping someone "in the loop," or, a personal favorite, "thinking outside the box." When I hear a phrase like that, I stop paying attention.

Well, don't stop reading. The crafts community is inherently a creative one, so naturally there's a lot of thinking outside the box. Whether it's hanging purses on tree branches for a last-minute display (with a nod to Heather Traeger, a first-time exhibitor at this summer's Buyers Market of American Craft) or refusing to let the economy dictate expansion plans (see Artcraft Collection's retail profile, page 60), the artists and business owners who make up this community rarely color inside the lines.

And why should they? No one ever made an impression by playing Follow the Leader with the competition. So explore awhile and find some inspiration of your own. What about turning your sidewalk window into a sound system? (page 76) Or tapping into your inner design guru and offering interior design services to complement your gallery? (page 44)

Whatever path you choose, do it with style and perseverance. When accepting his Top Retailer of the Year award at the ceremony Aug. 6 in Philadelphia, Walter Hazzard of Topeo Gallery in New Hope, Pa., acknowledged the economic troubles of the past year, but maintained "I have confidence in the crafts world." As do I.



ROGER FOLEY

Even Michael Lambert's "Dancin' Jars" (striking a pose in a Sticks hut) follow the beat of a different drum at Artcraft Collection in Reston, Va.

*Kris Stewart*

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# ALL THE RIGHT MOVES

“We  
want to be in situations that  
are as unique as we are,”

says Adam Winer, sitting at a gaily painted Sticks table, his hands running over the carved surfaces. Above him, a scalloped cutout hangs from the 20-foot ceiling, while a salmon-colored partition behind him creates an enclosed vignette.

Anyone familiar with Artcraft Collection will immediately feel at home in its newest store in downtown Reston, Va. At the same time, visitors will discover that Reston Artcraft has its own flavor: at 5,200 square feet, it's the largest of three Artcraft stores and the only one located in a modern, glass-clad building. What's more, it carries larger pieces of furniture and in some departments, like jewelry, its price points are higher.

A business with over \$3 million in annual sales, 25 employees and an inventory representing 500 artists, Artcraft was born out of passion. The

*The third time's the charm for Jay, Adam and Sharyn Winer—Artcraft Collection's newest gallery space allows for an expanded furniture selection, including this dining table from Sticks. The table vase is by Festa & Co.*

*Artcraft Collection continues to realize a passion, from the corner of a converted textile mill to a modern glass-clad building*

BY LEE LAWRENCE

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ROGER FOLEY





**“If** you can **INVEST** in something when things are **NOT** so good, you’re then in a position to benefit when things get **BETTER.**” —Jay Winer

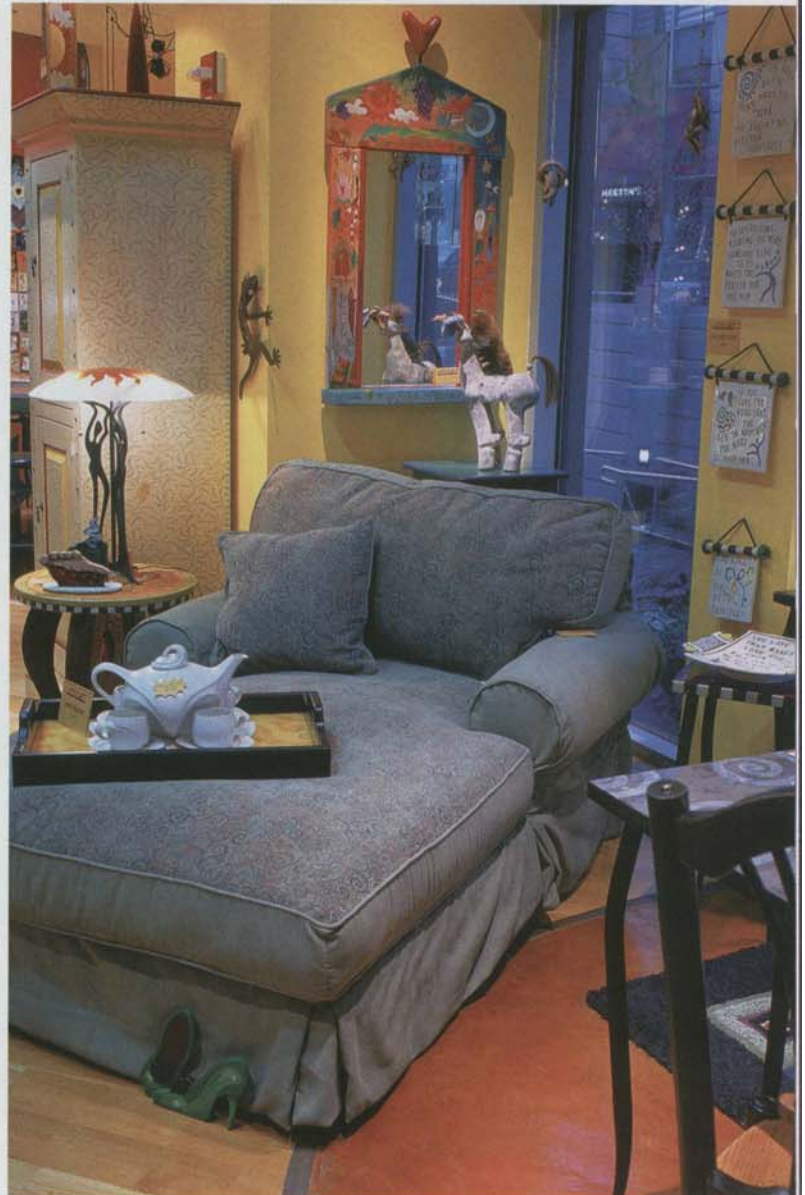


founder of AJ Properties, a family-owned property management company in Maryland, Jay Winer renovated a 19th-century textile mill in 1985. Located in the small town of Savage, about a 30-minute drive northeast of Washington, D.C., the mill once housed 12-foot-wide looms in spaces that Jay leased to art and craft dealers and home designers. In 1992, he and his wife Sharyn decided to take over a 1,500-square-foot corner unit and use it to share their passion for handcrafted American works. A former private detective, Sharyn channeled both her research skills and dogged persistence into the pursuit of artists, and the result was such a successful mix that the Winers expanded the store a year later and again in 1997 to its present 4,500 square feet.

In the early years, they were known primarily for gift items—jewelry, pottery and glass. But then Sharyn and Jay spotted furniture by David Marsh. “For four years, we wooed him,” Jay recalls, “until one day he called and said one of his galleries had a flood and could we take a shipment.” From then on Arcraft’s center of gravity shifted to home accessories, with a growing selection of furniture that today includes color-rich pieces by Sarah Grant-Hutchinson and Jim Lueders of Sticks, as well as whimsical, often mind-bending works by Ralph Garrett of Shoestring Creations and metal furniture by Noll Van Voorhis of Accoutrements Etc.

#### Worlds Apart

With the exception of glass, which Pat Gottemoeller of Vitreosity purchases and sells exclusively through Arcraft, Sharyn does the buying with input from Jay and Adam as



*Brightly-colored partitions create individual vignettes in the Reston store, allowing customers to imagine pieces as they might look in their own homes. Cricket Forge’s butterfly bench holds stuffed versions of Edgar Allan Poe, Sigmund Freud and others, by artist Connie Matricardi. The chaise is from Home Collection.*

# “The stores are only 45 minutes apart, but WORLDS apart in terms of taste and BUYING PATTERNS.”

—Sharyn Winer



well as Artercraft clients. “I study what we sold each day in each store,” Sharyn says. “They are only 45 minutes apart, but worlds apart in terms of taste and buying patterns.”

As a result, each store reflects the taste of its client base as much as that of the Winers. But they all sport the Artercraft “look.” This is because the Winers maintain a consistency among the interiors—color-saturated walls, funky partitions, self-contained vignettes—and because one person, Willie Phillips, designs and oversees the displays in all three locations.

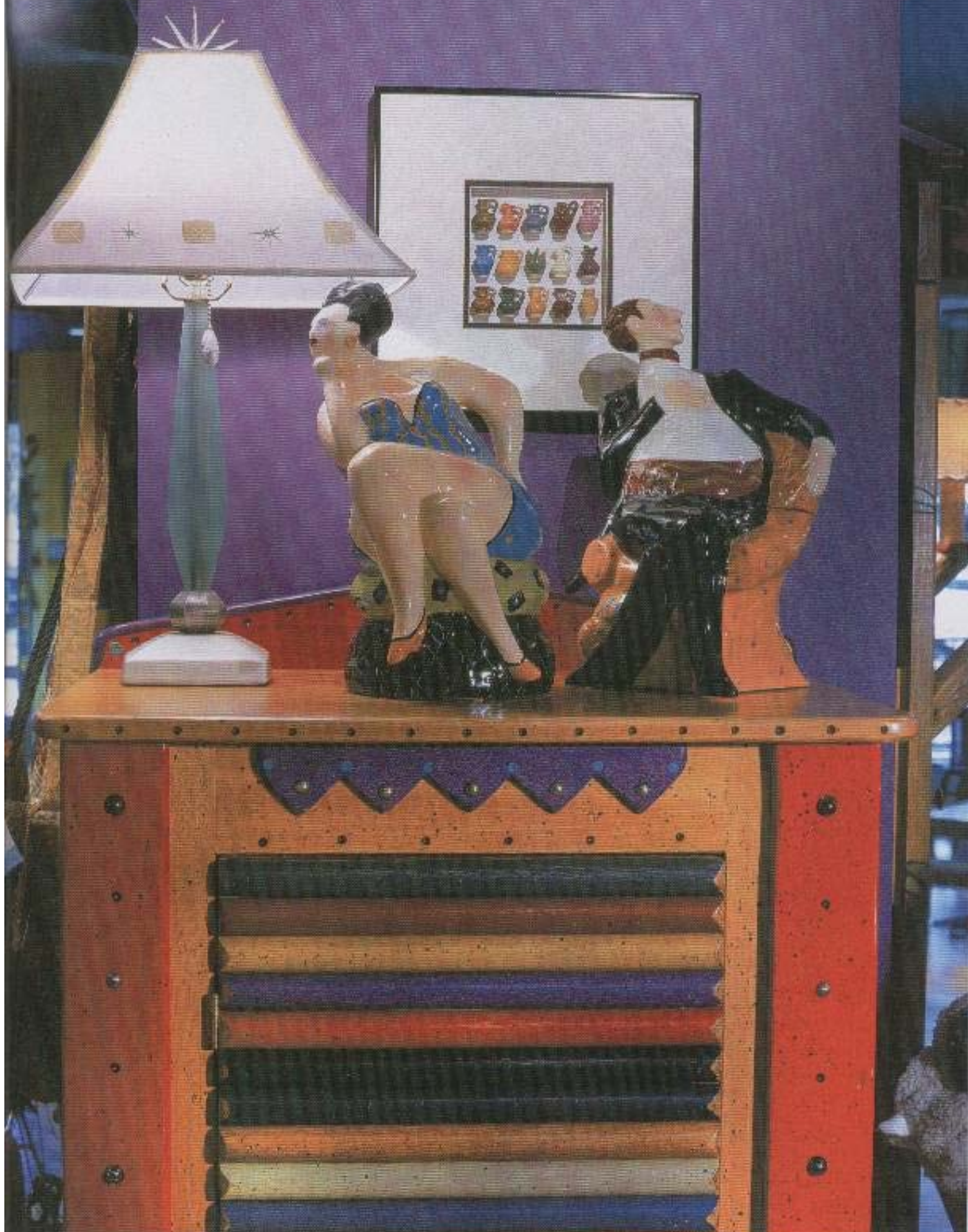
Although Phillips sets the pitch, everyone at Artercraft carries the tune. The minute an item sells, another takes its place. “You will never see an empty nail,” says Sharyn, adding that Artercraft employees also share another responsibility: learning about each artist and sharing that knowledge with customers, whether they are looking at a \$15 bowl or a \$1,900 fountain.

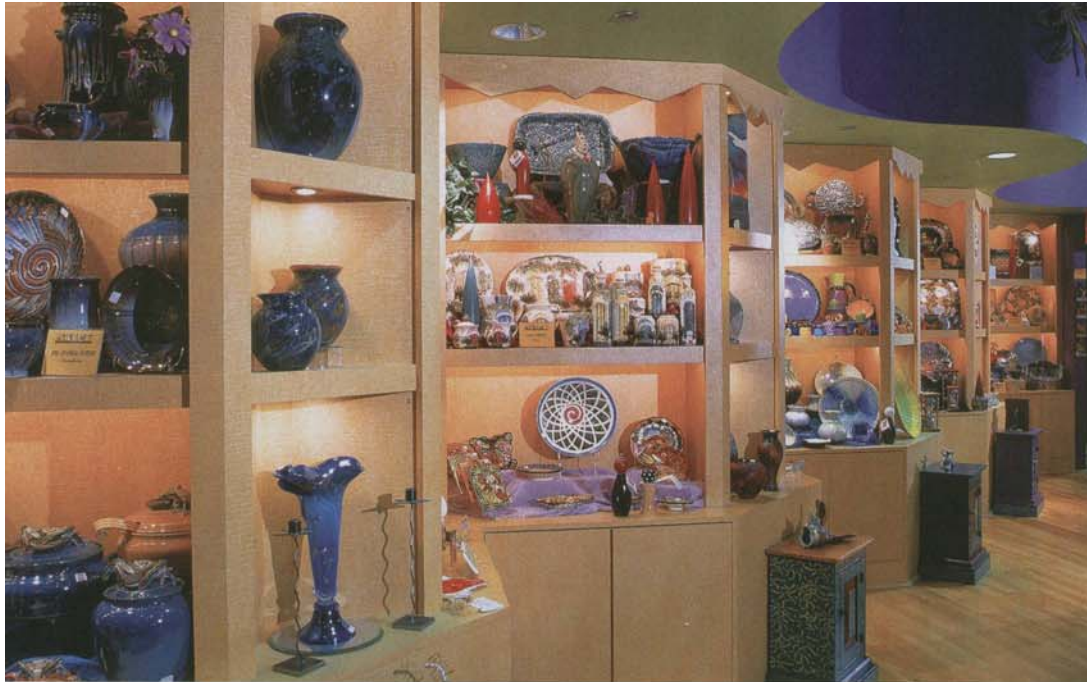
What happens on the shop floor, however, is only part of Artercraft’s success. Every decision is based on long-term planning, sound research and thoughtful marketing. When it came time to expand, for example, the Winers determined to retain their hands-on management style, so they looked for locations that were an easy commute from Savage Mill.

They concluded that Alexandria’s Old Town was the best bet. It had a strong local market due to its proximity to Washington, D.C., along with a strong tourist market thanks to its historic appeal. And the city had no similar stores. Opened in July 2000, the Alexandria store today “has the highest sales per square foot,” says Jay.

By then, Adam had quit an advertising agency job and joined his parents as third co-owner. He oversees the design of the mailers, website and television spots. The latter are the trickiest. To avoid what he calls “cheerzy local spots,” he develops crisp PowerPoint presentations and uses them instead of video. He then analyzes Artercraft’s 18,000-strong mailing list and hires an ad agency to tell him what local cable stations cater to the demographics he wants to reach.

*Canisters from McGowen-Cimmaron sit atop a cabinet by David Marsh, built from broomstick handles. The guitar CD cabinet is by Ralph Garrett.*





Custom-built cases highlight individual collections of ceramic artists including Bill Campbell and Richard Ashburn. The face vase is from Babroff Studios.

## THE Artcraft COLLECTION

**Historic Savage Mill**  
8600 Foundry St.  
Savage MD 20763  
410-880-4863

**Old Town Alexandria**  
132 King St.  
Alexandria VA 22314  
703-299-6616

**Reston Town Center**  
11960 Market St.  
Reston VA 20190  
703-964-0145

Artcraft@aol.com  
www.Artcraftcollection.com

**OWNERS:** Sharyn, Jay and Adam Winer

**YEAR FOUNDED:** 1992

**RETAIL SPACE:** 4,500 square feet (Savage); 2,400 square feet (Alexandria); 5,200 square feet (Reston)

**NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES:** 25

**ANNUAL SALES:** Over \$3 million

**NUMBER OF ARTISTS REPRESENTED:** 500

**MERCHANDISE MIX:** furniture, ceramics, metal, glass, wood, fiber

**ADVERTISING/MARKETING METHODS:** magazine, newspaper, television, website, direct mail

**MAILING LIST:** 18,000

**SPECIAL EVENTS:** spring trunk shows, charity fundraisers

**CUSTOMER SERVICES:** ship anywhere, holiday wrapping, special installations

Another successful marketing technique is a private sale for mailing list customers, offering 10-20% off most items twice a year. This allows them to strengthen ties with their customers, to keep, as Sharyn puts it, "the sale within the family," and never to devalue their artists by publicly marking down their works.



### Timing Is Everything

Further expansion was not on their minds in 2002, but when one of the major developers of Reston's new downtown approached the Winers, "our ears perked up over the space and its possibilities," Adam recalls. Still, with the economy slowing down, not everyone thought this was the right time to expand.

"Some people thought we were crazy," Jay recalls, "but I learned from my family business that if you can invest in something when things are not so good, you're then in a position to benefit when things get better." Again, they researched. They learned that condos were sprouting like mushrooms and that Reston had not a single furniture store. The Winers went

for it, opening the store in April 2003.

On any given day, Adam can be spotted chatting with young couples eager to furnish their homes with the pizzazz of handcrafted furniture and accessories. They often end up clustered around a laptop as Adam shows them the range of furniture they can commission, information about individual artists, or pieces that are available at the other Artcraft locations. Indeed, the laptop is a fixture in all three stores, yet another useful marketing tool that helps the Winers accomplish Artcraft's basic mission: to put their entrepreneurial experience at the service of contemporary craft art and the men and women who create it. ■

*A regular contributor to NICHE, Lee Lawrence writes about the arts from her home in Washington, D.C.*