



Make My Day

TEXT BY KATIE CAPRI / PHOTOS BY OHAD CADJI

On a snowy afternoon in December of 2008, I ventured from Oakland to Highland Park to attend my first I Made it Market, a nomadic indie craft fair held a few times a year around Pittsburgh. Once I stepped off the 71A and walked into the Union Project - an old church building complete with weathered stained-glass windows and the sweet aroma of used books and wood paneling - I was immediately greeted at the door by a cheery woman inviting visitors to another craft fair the following day. As I moved further inside the dimly-lit sanctuary I noticed the pews had been replaced by vendors' tables and the congregation by a feeding frenzy of crafting junkies weaving through the displays in a shuffle, each person adding to the orchestral murmur of voices, footsteps and transactions permeating the building-- a big turnout for a baby organization like I Made It.

The following week I met up with the cheery woman, IMI cofounder Carrie Nardini, to talk to her about the

market and its conception just a year and a half ago. Having always been a crafter herself - with glass bead-making her forte - she wanted to open up new venues for amateur crafters besides boutiques and annual craft fairs which mainly service career crafters. While attending a craft fair at Carnegie Mellon in 2007, Nardini met Nina Baruto, her future IMI cofounder. The two shared the same idea about the city's need for more craft venues, and just three weeks later they held the first IMI Market at Garfield Artworks, a success that reaffirmed the founders' mission. "The first IMI showed us that there was a need for an event like ours in Pittsburgh because so many people showed up and were interested in connecting with and purchasing from the vendors," Nardini said. Since then, I Made It has hosted thirteen markets in different communities around the 'Burgh, but it was not as easy as Nardini makes it seem. "It took a lot of networking and legwork to



get the event off the ground,” said the craft-mistress. No one said cultivating Pittsburgh’s corner of the amateur craft-nation would be easy. Baruto and Nardini’s mission for IMI was to create an inclusive place for first-time vendors to sell goods and get one-on-one feedback from clientele. The two also wanted to highlight the amazing local crafting talent, a mission Nardini intends to continue. Her main goal for the market is to stimulate networking

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within the crafting community. “[IMI] gives all vendors publicity with other vendors,” she said.

It also gives newbie vendors exposure to craft fair junkies like myself. As with most fairs, there was an assortment of soaps, candles, and jewelry, but the inclusivity of IMI extends to the fare you can find at this fair. Handmade magnets, bedazzled aprons and even extra-strength deodorant have a place at I Made It, and each market will yield different vendors from around the city. Consider I Made It a gypsy craft fair - Each market is held in a different community in Pittsburgh, bringing in a new audience and putting on a slightly varied show.



So how does a local crafter get involved with the Market? Nardini recommends checking out its website for news on upcoming events and to sign up for IMI's e-mail newsletter. She also suggests joining their Facebook group, I Made It Sunday Market.

Since its inception, both of IMI's founders have relocated out of the region, but have no fear - more crafting is near. I Made It has events lined up for the winter, starting with an "I Made it Junior" show at the Children's Museum of Pittsburgh on November 22nd and "I Made it for the Holidays" at Union Project on December 5th. With these Markets on the horizon (and more to come), keeping it crafty has gotten a whole lot easier. You never know where I Made It will strike next. As Nardini put it, "Sometimes we pop up where and when you would least expect it."

need even more info
on I Made It Market?

imadeitpgh.com

Below: Shoppers browse the many hand-made delights.

