

Bingham-Waggoner vendor turns keys, typewriters to jewelry

Antiques and crafts on sale to benefit estate

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The Examiner

Posted Jul 12, 2010 @ 11:58 PM



Adrienne DeWeese/The Examiner

St. Louis resident Anne Jansen, owner of The Key of A, displays one of her favorite jewelry creations, a necklace that recycles typewriter parts. Jansen's product was one of among 130 booths at the 23rd annual Bingham-Waggoner Antique and Craft Fair Saturday in Independence. 7.12.2010 Adrienne DeWeese



Independence, MO — Anne Jansen walked her six dogs along the Katy Trail in Marthasville, Mo., when the name of her latest business venture suddenly came to mind.

So, Jansen and her dogs ran home to write it down while it was still fresh in mind.

The Key of A.

The name combines her first initial, the use of keys in Jansen's repurposing of typewriters and her love for music and playing the piano that began at a young age.

The St. Louis-based Jansen joined 130 booth spaces Saturday during the 23rd annual Bingham-Waggoner Antique and Craft Fair in Independence. Now in her fourth year of owning The Key of A — and her second year at the Bingham-Waggoner Antique and Craft Fair — Jansen expanded her jewelry-making business this year to include skeleton keys. Her business byline reads, "Who knows what inspiring words have been written and locked doors opened using these very keys?"

"This really speaks of my character," Jansen said of her vintage-inspired personality. "My girlfriends know me as someone who takes trash to treasure. I just see the potential in everything."

While Jansen draws her inspiration through typewriters and skeleton keys, several other craft vendors used gourds and antique silverware for their raw materials. The day also featured the performances of the Spirit of Independence community band and Dave Panico, "The Soaring Sax Man."

About 2,000 people visited the seven-hour craft and antique fair, according to Shireen McLaughlin, the site coordinator. The fair is among the estate's six major fundraising events each year and will make a net profit of about \$10,000 for the continuing preservation and

management of the Bingham-Waggoner Estate, McLaughlin said. While the city of Independence owns the 19.5-acre estate, the Bingham-Waggoner Historical Society is solely responsible for the estate's maintenance and management.

In Jansen's corner, she remembers the make and model of the typewriter each key once called home.

Estate buyers and auctioneers often contact Jansen with typewriters that they were unable to sell. She also gets many of them from people who attend shows like Saturday's and "come back in the afternoon with a machine for sale," Jansen said.

After pulling the letter keys off for her jewelry, Jansen said she inventories the remaining typewriter parts and resells them on her website, www.thekeyofa.com

"I refuse to let them hit the landfill," she said. "If waste management would let me go in and dig them out, I would."

She is "recycling what she can" and is "riding a wave" for now, but Jansen said she believes what she does through The Key of A will eventually become passé through mass-marketed merchandise.

"You don't know what novel may've been typed on the typewriter or what secrets may've been locked away with the skeleton keys," Jansen said. "When people come to the booth, they don't always think of that, but when you start to imagine that, it lingers with you for a while."

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