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## Troy artist sells unique boxes as Royal Oak Farmers Market turns artsy

By Stephanie Sokol For Digital First Media 1 hr ago



Artist Ruth Heginbottom calls this small cabinet with drawers Allium, after the flowers decorating the front. Courtesy Ruth Heginbottom

Everyday, functional objects don't have to be boring. Ruth Heginbottom knows this.

Her line of handmade Bella Boxes, from jewelry boxes to organizers and even urns, serve as storage containers, but they also tell whimsical stories of their own.



Artist Ruth Heginbottom decorated her box *Dragonfly Redemption* in an abstract design. Courtesy Ruth Heginbottom

She started making them for her Barbie dolls when she was 10 years old, and her childhood craft grew into a passion she's practiced for years.

"They became a lot of fun," says Heginbottom, a Troy resident. "I would get scraps of board, paper and fashion boxes. It grew to be a love of mine."

Heginbottom creates her Bella Boxes by building outward from an idea. She uses found objects, and finds inspiration all around her — whether it be from someone's clothing, plants or animals or architecture. One idea came from a tall, old building. She molds the cardboard into boxes of different

shapes and sizes first, adding a velvet lining to each one. Some are simple inside, and others have more detail, like drawers or small shelves.

"They are multipurpose boxes — you can use the ones that have different layers as jewelry boxes," Heginbottom says. "But I also make boxes that have one layer. They're very versatile."

When she figures out what she wants a box's theme to be, she plans how to build on that theme. This is the most creative part of Heginbottom's process, and so more time-consuming.

Her most popular boxes at art fairs are the Itty Bitty Bellas — square 2-by-2 boxes, ideal for holding a small gift. Since 2011, she has made more than 16,000 of those small boxes, and will offer many of them at the Royal Oak Artists Market, with festive themes including images representing all faiths.

In addition to creating special-order boxes for people and companies, participating in fairs is a favorite way to get her works out into the public.

“I really enjoy talking to people at art fairs,” She says. “There are some times that I get my ideas from customers — they ask, ‘Can you make something like this?’ and usually, the answer is yes. I get inspired and led down a design path by customers.”

Presented by The Guild of Artists & Artisans, a nonprofit organization promoting art in the community, The Royal Oak Market: Art Fair Edition takes place at Royal Oak Farmers Market Nov. 15 and 16. In its third year, it happens twice annually, in spring and late



Artist Ruth Heginbottom decorated this jewelry case with aspen leaves, calling it Aspen Glow. Courtesy Ruth Heginbottom



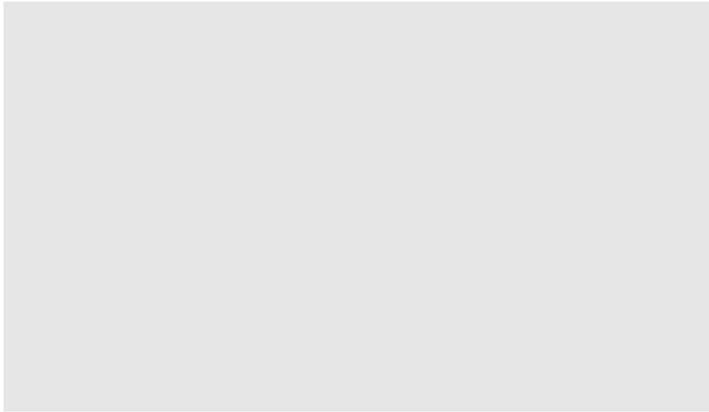
fall. Sixty-five artists from around the country with present quality handmade items at the market, including ceramics, paintings, photography, glass, jewelry, sculptures, drawings, prints and more.

In addition to a place to pick up a unique handmade holiday gift, there also will be food trucks and live music during the two-day event.

For Heginbottom, art fairs make her feel more connected with the people who support her art.

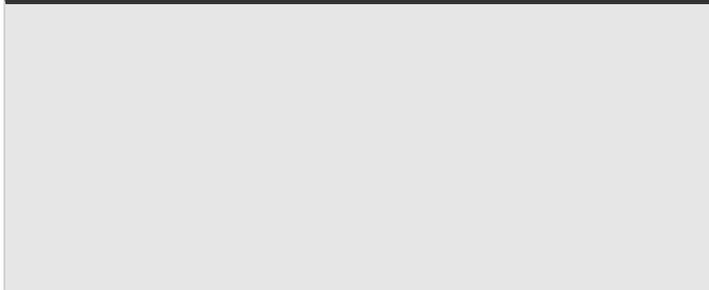
“I want them to just love the creation that I do and I hope it brings them joy,” Heginbottom says. “So often even if people

Ruth Heginbottom created these Itty Bitty Bellas, small boxes decorated in eye-catching colors and affixed with flowers. Courtesy Ruth Heginbottom



aren't purchasing from me a second time, if they say they love the box, or gave one as a gift and they adored it, that just warms my heart. They get what I do and they get me."

- If You Go: The Royal Oak Market-Art Fair Edition runs from noon-10 p.m. on Nov. 15-16 at 316 E. 11 Mile Road, Royal Oak. To learn more, visit [theguild.org/fair/royal-oak-market-art-fair](http://theguild.org/fair/royal-oak-market-art-fair).



Artist Ruth Heginbottom makes all of her boxes as unique designs that spark imagination. Courtesy Ruth Heginbottom

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