



An indigenous statue protectively surveys a selection of beads. Beads have been significant as ritual offerings among the Kogi of Colombia, and many cultures attach religious meaning to a strand of beads — rosaries, for example.



Twins Ann (left) and Anita Tristan share a passion for beading. Now, as owners of the newly opened Bonita Bead Boutique, they share their interest expertise, experience and craftsmanship with the Maumee community.

MIRROR PHOTOS BY LAUREN C. OSTBERG

Bonita Bead Boutique Joins Uptown Businesses, Bringing Color, Variety And A Spice Of Culture

BY LAUREN C. OSTBERG
MIRROR REPORTER

A bead necklace is more than a piece of jewelry. Over the years, beads have acquired historical, cultural and spiritual significance. At the very least, a string of beads is a compelling combination of uniformity and variety that combine to create a unique piece.

Meet twins Ann and Anita Tristan, owners of Bonita Bead Boutique, an uptown Maumee business whose operations parallel its merchandise.

The Tristans offer a variety of unique beads to accommodate all sorts of interests and skill levels.

"We're able to service every culture," Ann said, pointing out the international diversity in their selection, as well as their wood, bone and rosary beads.

The store's name is a nod to the Tristans' cultural origins. "Bonita" means "beautiful" in Spanish.

"I just wanted to give it a spice of our heritage," Anita said.

Their bead selection varies in size, period and geographic origin, from an antique German necklace to opals from Mexico, Australia, Africa and Brazil. They also have beads from India, China, Afghanistan and the Czech Republic.

Whether the beads are fire polished, crystals, semi-precious stones, vintage,



Bonita Bead Boutique offers a wide selection of beads, varying in size, age, material and origin.

coral, lamp-work, handmade or made from bones, horn or hand-blown glass, they all have something in common.

"We pay close attention to the quality of the beads," Anita said.

Customers benefit from the twins' keen eye, developed through 15 years of experience in and study of beading.

Furthermore, their selection is unique. They shop around for "one-of-a-kind, unique, handcrafted pieces," especially vintage beads.

Despite the variety of beads, BBB seems to have put all of its proverbial eggs in one basket. Ann is comfortable with this.

"Beads are my niche —

Anita's too. It makes me happy. It's what I want to do," she said.

Ann particularly enjoys the relaxation that beading brings her.

"It can be therapeutic," she said.

Moreover, beads have significance throughout the world and throughout the ages. Beads first appeared in 30,000 B.C. and have been used as currency, symbols of power and tokens in religious ceremonies.

"Beads are beyond fashion," Ann said, noting that they have had meaning to a variety of people. "They're part of tradition, but they're also trendy right now," she added, moving from the history to the future of beading.

The Tristans will share their beading skills with the next generation on June 7, 13 and 18 at their summer camp for kids. Children between the ages of 8 and 14 can learn basic beading technique, including how to string, enclose and put a clasp on a piece of beading.

The instruction fee is \$7.00, and students must

purchase their own supplies. Tools will be available for in-class use.

Anita also offers the boutique's back room as a workstation for any adult who wishes to use it.

"We want this to be more of a fun, home atmosphere than a retail space," she explained.

People are encouraged to come in and just browse, read a magazine in the back to learn about new techniques, or read the Tristans' on-site reference book to learn about the history of beading.

"We're not targeting a specific age group or clientele. I want people of every age to come here," Ann said. She envisions an all-inclusive "artistic community."

Ann and Anita are pleased that they have settled in Maumee.

"We wanted a place with a lot of character," they agreed.

Both sisters praised the "antiquish, shabby-chic" look of their location, but Ann, who previously lived in Maumee for almost five

interested adults.

The twins also hope to help fellow bead makers, to "give back" to the people who helped them along the way. After several years of working under consignment at the Toledo Museum of Art, the Tristans set out on their own, selling their jewelry at specialty stores at one-stop trunk shows.

Now, as business owners, they plan to host trunk shows at Bonita Bead Boutique, giving local artists and bead makers the opportunity to showcase their work.

Of course, the Tristans' own work will be displayed regularly in their boutique. They also restore and repair old pieces of jewelry, and take special orders for proms, weddings or other special occasions.

"(Customers) can design the piece themselves, if they'd like," Ann offered, open to suggestion.

Bonita Bead Boutique also sells basic beading tools, stringing materials and findings. More than 200 designs of beads are available individually or in strand.

Bonita Bead Boutique is located at 215 Conant St. Hours are 10:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m. on weekdays, 10:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m. on Saturday and noon until 5:00 p.m. on Sundays. To sign up for classes, or for more information, call (419) 887-4000 or visit www.bonitabeadboutique.com.

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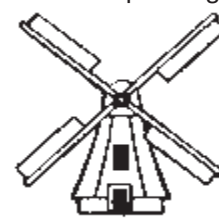
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