

HUCKLEBERRY COUNTRY ARTS

if it's happening, it's happening in the Huckleberry

Beautiful Nuts:
Tagua Comes to Washington

By: Kathleen Kiefer

This question is for the women of Huckleberry Country. Have you ever noticed someone wearing a necklace or bracelet that was so colorful and unusual that it captured your attention to the point you had to pull your eyes from staring at it? Maybe you didn't have the courage to ask the person wearing it where they got it? It has happened to me, but I'm usually the one to ask the wearer, even a complete stranger, to tell me the story behind the piece and where it came from.

I love beautiful hand made items of personal adornment. That includes earrings, necklaces, bracelets, and scarves. I have had the good fortune to travel to places in the Southwest where some of the most stunning silver, beaded, turquoise and gemstone pieces are created by indigenous craftspeople.

Over the years I have studied my own inclinations when it comes to what piece of jewelry or scarf I wear on any given day. I have come to understand what I place on my ears, my neck or my wrist is an extension of how I am feeling that morning. I 'check-in' with my emotions, or my 'vibration' to learn what feels right in the moment I am contemplating the object. This practice of contemplating has a lot to do with color and texture of the object I am considering. I think all women, and men who wear jewelry have an attachment to the objects they place on their bodies. After all, personal adornment is a tradition that goes back centuries. Light and color influence us every second of every day, in what we see and often, how we feel. What we wear on our bodies is just as much an extension of who we are as the clothes we wear and the attitude that we project.

With my recent discovery of hand-made Tagua jewelry from Ecuador being sold and shipped from Ephrata, Washington I was delighted to find a source of beautifully colored, textured, designed and afford-

able adornments. Tagua (pronounced Tahg-Wah) nuts are seeds produced by a tree similar to the palm tree. Tagua, also known as vegetable ivory, is more dense and resilient than ivory. This eco-friendly tree supports jobs for artisans that stimulate local economies, providing an alternative to cutting down rain forests for farming. It also deters the elephant ivory trade by providing a desirable ivory alternative. Tagua trees grow only in the tropical rainforests of a few South American countries along the Pacific Coast. Ecuador is the country that fulfills most of the world's demand.

The ripe fruit is gathered from the ground after falling from the tree then sun-dried for 4-6 months before being carved and dyed. No two nuts are alike in shape or texture.

Artisans crafting the bead-like nuts work tediously to match shape and color for each piece they create. Using string or elastic ties and Tagua beads as fasteners, each piece, whether it is a necklace, bracelet or earrings is unlike any other piece. Though they all come from the same product, natural ivory, no two pieces will ever look the same.

It is delightful to find such a beautiful objects of personal adornment. Purchasing them helps save rain forests and elephants and I can't imagine a better way to support a small local business. I want to wear this stuff every day, but guess what? It's Christmas time and the first three pieces I bought are gifts. Share the love this Christmas - check out these beautiful handcrafted and totally individual works of natural ivory art. The small business selling these products is called Antolu. Their

website is Antolu.com. where you can see photographs of some of their products.

Happy giving – happy New Year - happy colorful day.



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