

Women design for success at Chicago show

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By JIAN PING(China Daily USA)



One of a Kind Show is filled with visitors on the opening morning at Chicago's Merchandise Mart on Dec. 3. Jian ping / for China Daily

Two Chinese women, one focused on knitting accessories and the other women's clothes are busily running booths at the 15th annual One of a Kind Show at the Merchandise Mart in Chicago.

The popular four-day show attracts approximately 65,000 visitors each year. More than 600 artists from the US and Canada will display wares at the show this year.

"This is my fourth year to be at the show," said Michelle Tan, a designer who was born in Hong Kong and grew up mostly in Chicago.

Tan said that unlike trade shows, One of a Kind is open to the public.

Tan said you "get direct feedback. It's great."

Tan studied at the city's International Academy of Design and Technology and eventually turned her passion for fashion design into a profession. She has created a brand under her name and her clothing is handmade in Chicago.

She beamed when talking about a pink dress that she designed was worn by actress Gabourey Sidibe in the midseason finale of the television series Empire on Dec. 2.

Ping Wu, one of seven featured artists to speak at the show, was enthusiastic about the accessories she designed. Wu said she pursued a childhood interest in knitting after becoming a physical therapist in the US.

"I put my work on hold and spent a year at the Istituto Marangoni in Milan to study fashion design," she said.

Her booth features a variety of scarves and hats, along with some hand-knit sweaters.

"My accessories are highly functional and practical," Wu said.

She demonstrated to customers various ways to wear one of her scarves, from putting it over her hair and letting it sit on her shoulders to wrapping it around her neck and using it as a pair of long gloves.

"This is really cute, really different," said Helen Bacza, a customer trying on one of Wu's scarves.

"I bought that white hat from you last year," said Suzi Paradiso, another visitor to Wu's booth, as she pointed to a knit hat on the wall.

Paradiso said she had attended the show the last five years and found many items "very unique".

Wu said she was delighted by the success she had at the show last year.

"I like this show," she continued. "Chicago customers really appreciate the design and handmade products."

One of a Kind features handcrafted fine arts, fashion and accessories, along with home décor products, gourmet food and children's goods. The show opened on Thursday and will run through Dec. 6.