

Kent Stetson Handbags

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Summary by Rebecca Coolong

Kent Stetson took a long and winding road to get to where he is now—following his passion by designing unique handbags. More than a decade ago, Kent was studying at Brown University on the pre-med track. He wanted to prove to everyone that he was smart. However, as it turns out, he was just “an artist in denial.” While studying at Brown, Kent worked part-time at a shoe store on Thayer Street in Providence. In his senior year, Kent spent a lot of his time doing digital painting, as well as manipulating actual paintings by taking a photograph of the work and then altering it using computer programs.

When he realized that art was his true passion, Kent held an event to showcase his pieces. Nobody was interested in purchasing any of his art, so Kent tried a new approach. He turned his artwork into a handbag. The first person he showed his creation to bought the bag, and his new business was born. Kent bought a second-hand industrial sewing machine and taught himself to sew through trial and error.

Kent took a day job as a real estate management trust agent, and used the money that he made to support his budding business. After six years, he quit his day job in full pursuit of his true passion. He takes inspiration from random objects in everyday life and turns that inspiration into tactile objects. One of the main production methods Kent uses is creating his designs on the computer and then printing them onto canvas that he then turns into a handbag.

Some of Kent’s most popular handbags use photographs of common items such as French fries, hamburgers, toy cars, human hands and even piles of garbage. Kent adds a whimsical touch to fashion and once used an actual preserved Newport Creamery French fry as an accent on the flap of his French fry-print clutch. He also uses toy cars to accent his car-print bags.

Kent loves experimenting with unique materials and patterns. He enjoys creating unique accessories for his clients, and once made a clutch for a friend using her young son’s artwork as the design, which he embroidered onto silk. Kent recently bought exotic skins from a hunter from Mozambique, which he has been using to create more upscale bags.

Kent’s bags are \$35 and up, and have been sold in Nordstrom and Fred Segal stores. He also sells his designs at Style Week, in the accessory showcase. The accessory showcase allows people to become involved with the show by purchasing pieces that have been featured on the runway. He sells a lot of small envelope clutch bags, as well as some larger pieces. After years of chasing the wrong dreams, Kent Stetson is finally on track and is living his true dream.