



DAVID ROYAL/The Herald

Stella Page displays a Kelly Bag at her studio in Moss Landing. Below: Page's Geisha Girl Bag.

SUCCESS IS IN THE BAG

MOSS LANDING DECOUPAGE ARTIST USES PURSES AS HER CANVAS

By VICTORIA MANLEY
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When Stella Page left her native Santa Cruz for Los Angeles in the early 1990s, decoupage was just a hobby of hers. She fastened paper cutouts to her living room furniture, or to small accessories as gifts for friends.

One year, she gave her sister a purse with her signature decoupage look on its Lucite front. While out for an evening in San Francisco with purse in hand, the sister was approached by an inquisitive buyer. When she said it was a gift from Page, she handed her his business card.

A few weeks later, Page's hobby blossomed into business.

She has since returned to the Central Coast, where she is churning out several dozen clutches, purses and briefcases for boutiques, benefits and trade shows throughout California.

"Nobody knows I'm here," said Page, 49.

Moving to Moss Landing from Los Angeles "was kind of career suicide," she said, but it also has given her an opportunity to be closer to family, and to work at

her own pace in an environment she finds inspiring.

"Everything out here is beautiful," she said.

From her 2,000-square-foot home-based studio, the designer is steadily building a local clientele, including She and Cactus

stores in Carmel. Her line is also featured at boutiques in Los Angeles, Santa Barbara, Cabo San Lucas and London.

"I really like handpicking my places," Page said.

Made for "a very feminine woman, usually with some disposable income," the designer's Lucite-and-leather purses sell for an average \$275 apiece and come in a host of colors, styles and sizes.

Her designs seem to revolve around a few key themes: Victorian-era angels and floral prints, and Mexican and Asian art.

The bags themselves come from a factory in Hong Kong. The paper designs are from books and prints that Page has picked up at local bookstores and stationers.

Page and her pair of employees fasten the cutouts to the bags' Lucite fronts. (Page won't disclose what medium she uses on her bags, but most decoupage material can be found at craft stores.)

The bags are finished with a

