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## **INDEPENDENT DESIGNERS REACH OUT TO OAKLAND THIS HOLIDAY SEASON**

OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA - October 25, 2006 - i {heart} independent, an event planning company, is bringing Bay Area designers to Oakland for their premiere holiday shopping event. The event will be held at Pro Arts Gallery in Oakland, 555 Second Street in Jack London Square on Saturday, December 9<sup>th</sup> from 11 am – 4 pm. Talented local artisans will showcase their products such as jewelry, accessories, handbags and clothing.

Oakland has yet to be known to play host to events such as this. Urban fairs are more common in metropolitan areas of the Bay such as San Francisco. As Oakland continues to re-develop and reclaim it's reputation, i {heart} independent sees it as a chance to welcome artists and designers into the community. Co-founder Tisha Velmonte stated, "When people think of Oakland, they think of high crime rates and rough streets. This is an opportunity for Bay Area artists to illustrate that Oakland is a dynamic neighborhood abundant with creativity."

i {heart} independent was formed by two Bay Area artists, Andrea Siu and Tisha Velmonte. Andrea, an accessory designer who recently moved back from the Los Angeles area, first noticed a plethora of marketable talent in the East Bay. Andrea stated, "The East Bay remains a largely untapped market of creativity and talent. We believe we have found a way for artists to reach out to the public and draw more attention to their endeavors." By partnering up with Tisha Velmonte, an Oakland resident and designer, they joined forces to sell their products and include fellow artists in the process. Tisha stated, "We feel strongly that this event will benefit everyone by generating interest and local business. We intend to promote more activity like this in Oakland in the upcoming year."

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