



Finding Enid with LOVE

Purse Anthropology to Discover Enid Collins of Texas

Quick Facts

Created:	2012
Location:	Denver, Colo. area
Founder:	Karen Adler, M.A.
Business type:	L3C, low-profit limited liability corp. with social purpose
Collection type:	Physical objects
Collection size:	More than 1,000 original artworks, plus derivatives & documents
Collection scope:	Box bags, totes and other items designed by Enid Collins from 1961 to 1972, and by competitors and imitators through today.
Vintage Collins box bags:	580
Enid Collins titles:	200 plus
Vintage Collins totes:	221
Derivatives:	74
Original faux jewels in glass and acrylic:	More than 3,000
Different styles of faux gems and embellishments:	More than 400
Bags restored:	About 650
Bags resold:	About 355
First acquisition:	“LOVE” 1968 square box bag, for \$180
Largest acquisition:	More than 300, from a private collector in 2018
Most spent to acquire a single bag:	\$900, for “Green Thumb”
Least spent for a bag:	\$7, for a “Tres Flores” missing most of its jewels
Notable works in the collection:	“Autograph Hound”, “Fiesta Flambeau”, “Forbidden Fruit”, “Green Thumb”, “It’s a Whole New Sound” (with built-in transistor radio), “Winner’s Circle”
Oldest work:	Leather clutch, approximately 1960
Latest work:	“Wise Guys”, 1972
Online collection:	www.findingenidcollins.com , launched 2016 with 425 individual bags in 119 titles
Online storefronts:	FindingENIDwithLOVE on Etsy; ManifestART on eBay



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About Finding Enid with LOVE, L3C

Finding Enid with LOVE is a small social enterprise based near Denver, Colorado, that collects, researches, documents and curates the artwork of Enid Collins (1918-1990), a mid-century designer and entrepreneur whose name has become synonymous with the bejeweled box purses that made her a fashion legend.

Mission: To discover Enid Collins through her handbags and the people who wear them. We seek to assemble a museum-quality collection of Collins original artworks so that we may illuminate her significance as an American decorative artist, designer and female entrepreneur.

Project History

Finding Enid with LOVE was founded by Karen Adler in 2012 to formalize her collection of original vintage box bags and other works by Enid Collins, and share her growing knowledge. She discovered Collins in 2011, when she stumbled upon a vintage “LOVE” box purse in a Chicago thrift store. She hunted down some more and featured them in a tramp art exhibit at her Niwot, Colorado, “manifest ART gallery” (now closed). As she acquired and studied bag upon bag, her casual interest evolved into a serious project. Applying her professional background in art and cultural anthropology, she began in earnest to collect and study as many original Collins artworks as possible. She dubbed her method “purse anthropology.”

Adler launched an Ebay store to offer some of the authentic replacement jewels she was accumulating, and in 2013 started to refresh and sell original bags on Etsy (she now retains at least one example of each design). She quickly built a reputation for expertise among collectors and resellers, particularly in authenticating and dating bags, and identifying Collins’s signature faux jewels. In 2015, she published her catalog online to share it with the world and raise awareness of Collins as an important folk artist. It included more than 400 box bags and became a valuable reference for collectors old and new.

Adler organized the project as an L3C, a type of limited liability company that also serves a social purpose, in 2022. Today, her museum-quality collection includes more than 1,000 original Enid Collins box bags, totes, bucket bags and papier maché, derivatives and imitations, plus photos, vintage ads and documents. Through study of Collins artworks, she seeks to build understanding about this important American artist, preserve and exhibit her art, and educate and inspire all who seek to know Enid—with love!



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About Karen Adler Founder, *Finding Enid with LOVE*

Karen Adler is an artist and entrepreneur with a background in cultural anthropology, fine art, travel and journalism. She founded *Finding Enid with LOVE* in 2011 as a personal project after discovering a vintage 1963 Enid Collins LOVE box purse in a Chicago thrift store, and featuring Collins works in a “Tramped” show at her Niwot, Colo. gallery, manifest ART. In 2022, she organized the project as an L3C, a type of limited-liability company with profit limits and a social purpose.

She completed doctoral study in cultural anthropology at the University of Colorado at Boulder, holds an M.A. in Cultural Anthropology from Northern Illinois University and a B.S. in Journalism from Southern Illinois University. She is currently earning a Professional Certificate in Museology at UC Boulder, and planning to gain appraiser credentials this summer.

Prior to launching *Finding Enid with LOVE*, she worked as a painter, photographer and gallery owner while raising two children on a ranch in the Rocky Mountain foothills. She also served 20 years as a flight attendant with United Airlines. She lives in Longmont, Colorado.

As Karen puts it:

Like Enid Collins, I am a bit of a hybrid: part artist, part entrepreneur. As Enid Collins might put it, “I’m a mixed bag.” I completed doctoral study in cultural anthropology at the University of Colorado at Boulder, hold an M.A. in Cultural Anthropology from Northern Illinois University and a B.S. in Journalism and Spanish from Southern Illinois University. Prior to launching *Finding Enid with LOVE*, I painted and operated an independent art gallery while on a ranch in the Rocky Mountain foothills. I also served 20 years as a flight attendant with United Airlines.

I am inspired by exploring unknowns and discovery, especially when encountering “ordinary” or overlooked art, and connecting with the people and stories that emerge from their design, fabrication and everyday use. I founded *Finding Enid with LOVE* in 2012 after discovering a vintage 1968 Enid Collins LOVE box purse in a Chicago thrift store. I featured it and additional Collins works in a “Tramped” show at my Niwot, Colo., *manifest ART gallery* and began studying Enid in earnest. Today, I am earning a Professional Certificate in Museology at CU Boulder. My vision for *Finding Enid with LOVE* is to assemble a comprehensive collection of original artworks that I may preserve and share in its own permanent home someday.



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News Clips & Links

Pieces featuring or mentioning Karen Adler and Finding Enid with LOVE:

“Film fest hosts Texas’ best,” *Fredericksburg Standard-Radio Post*, June 8, 2022.

<https://www.fredericksburgstandard.com/gillespie-life/film-fest-hosts-texas-best>

“Is It Time for an Enid Collins Revival?”, Alexandra Jacobs, *The New York Times*, Styles section. March 31, 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/31/style/enid-collins-bags.html?smid=url-share>

“Knock on ‘Wood’,” Marilyn Kirschner, *The Look Online*. July 30, 2015.

https://lookonline.com/market-report-by-marilyn-kirschner/in-market-report_30-3/

“Manifest Art Gallery in Niwot highlights folk art in ‘Tramped’,” Quentin Young, *Boulder Daily Camera*. Aug. 6, 2012. <https://www.timescall.com/2012/08/06/manifest-art-gallery-in-niwot-highlights-folk-art-in-tramped/>

Pieces featuring or mentioning Enid Collins (in addition to above):

“ENID the ICON: Artist Enid Collins became a national name for her popular purses,” Sallie Lewis, *Rock & Vine* magazine, Spring 2022. <https://rockandvinemag.com/2022/04/enid-the-icon/>

“Jeep Collins’ memoir tells story of his mother’s showy handbags, demanding nature,” Nancy Cook- Monroe, *San Antonio Report*. May 17, 2021.

<https://sanantonioreport.org/jeep-collins-book-review-enid-collins/>

“Book chronicles life of Enid Collins,” attributed to news staff, *The Bandera Bulletin*. April 21, 2021. <https://www.banderabulletin.com/article/news/book-chronicles-life-enid-collins>

“Matron of Style,” Ken Esten Cooke, *Fredericksburg Standard-Radio Post*, April 14, 2021.

<https://www.fredericksburgstandard.com/news/matron-style>

“Vintage Boutiques in San Antonio,” Jennifer Herrera, *San Antonio* magazine. December 2019. <https://www.sanantoniomag.com/vintage-boutiques-in-san-antonio/>

“Be the Artist: The Box Bags of Enid Collins,” Lisa Tate, *Geek Mom*. July 28, 2018.

<https://geekmom.com/2018/07/be-the-artist-the-box-bags-of-enid-collins/>

- “Why the Box Bag Is Your Must-Have Accessory for Fall,” Kristen Bateman, *allure* magazine. Oct. 24, 2016. <https://www.allure.com/story/box-bag-fall-accessory>
- “Enid Collins”, Stuart Mesires, *Classic Chicago Magazine*. Feb. 28, 2016. <https://www.classicchicagomagazine.com/enid-collins/>
- “9 Wooden Handbags You Have To See,” Amanda Richards, *Bustle*. Dec. 15, 2015. <https://www.bustle.com/articles/129807-9-wooden-handbags-to-celebrate-the-dawning-of-a-new-novelty-accessory-photos>
- “Tiki expert Jeff 'Beachbum' Berry finds a home for his cocktails and collectibles in New Orleans,” R. Stephanie Bruno, *The Times-Picayune*. July 10, 2013. https://www.nola.com/entertainment_life/home_garden/article_6896155d-4d32-537e-a4be-d7b5fff28a0c.html
- “Enid Collins: An Interview with her Son, Jeep,” Lizzie Bramlett, *The Vintage Traveler* blog. June 18, 2011. <https://thevintagetraveler.wordpress.com/2011/06/18/enid-collins-an-interview-with-her-son-jeep/>
- “Think twice before selling your glitzy Enid Collins' handbag,” Harry Rinker, *The Morning Call*. Oct. 9, 2007. <https://www.mcall.com/news/mc-xpm-2007-10-09-3785314-story.html>
- “Art’s Bag ladies,” Elaine Wolff, *San Antonio Current*, July 28, 2005. <https://www.sacurrent.com/sanantonio/arts-bag-ladies/Content?oid=2273958>
- “Texas Primer: The Collins Purse,” Mimi Swartz, *Texas Monthly*. January 1984. <https://www.texasmonthly.com/being-texan/texas-primer-the-collins-purse/>



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PRESS RELEASE
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www.findingenidcollins.com

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Beguiling. Bejeweled. Beloved.

How do you know when an old handbag is more than just kitsch?

When it feels like love at first sight – even 60 years later.

“Purse anthropologist” Karen Adler asks us to consider how clunky, gaudy but enduringly desirable handbags created by Mid-Century designer Enid Collins are more than just eye candy and looks at the artistry behind the bling in her upcoming discussion, “Enid Collins of Texas: Queen of Kitsch?” The one-hour talk, part of the Friday educational seminar line-up at 2023 Arizona Tiki Oasis, will take place at 2 p.m. April 28 at Hotel Valley Ho, 6850 E. Main St., Scottsdale.

DENVER, Colo. (April 10, 2023) — Have you ever had *that feeling*?

There you are, in the midst of a dreary everyday or soon-forgotten errand when — zowie! You’re struck by the undeniable dart of physical attraction.

When you’re not looking for it, in a fragment of an instant easily missed, something catches your eye. Not some one. Some *thing*.

Something small. Something strange. Something... spangled.

You have no idea what it is. But you know you have to have it.

This bolt-from-the-blue infatuation is how many people describe their first experience with a vintage handbag called “LOVE”.

That’s right. They’re not talking about partners or soulmates or an afternoon hook-up.

They’re talking about a purse.

“I walk in and there’s this table and I just see this wooden box bag—at the time I didn’t even know what it was or what it was called—but you see this, and you’re utterly bewitched by it,”

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“Enid Collins: Queen of Kitsch?” Seminar - 2



says Laura Seargeant-Richardson, a product and experience designer from Austin, Texas, who was aimlessly wandering through a local antiques mall when lightning struck.

The object was about the size of a box of upscale chocolates. Constructed of wood and painted with colorful letters spelling L-O-V-E, it gleamed with glass and plastic jewels.

“I remember thinking, ‘Oh yeah. I gotta have this,’” she says. “I brought it home, and that’s when the love affair started.”

About a decade earlier in upstate New York, glass artist Pat Duell was similarly enchanted by a “LOVE” bag decorated in Easter-egg-toned gems. The attraction, he says, was the art.

“I liked the fact that it was a little kitschy,” he says. “And I like things that are different.”

A father of five, he found himself buying the purse on impulse and quickly amassed a bejeweled-bag collection, displaying them all in his bedroom. Through the art, he says, the artist “has been here almost as long as my wife.”

“I remember it like it was yesterday, first laying eyes on that bag,” says Karen Adler, who was killing time in a Chicago vintage shop in 2011 when she stumbled across another “LOVE” bag. This one was square-ish and recalled the widely imitated stacked-letter “LOVE” design of Mid-Century artist Robert Indiana. It was decked out with flowers of white, gold and green gems.

“I picked it up and stared at it,” Adler says, “wondering, ‘Who is this?!’”

The “who” is Enid Collins, a Mid-Century decorative artist who between 1946 and 1972 created a prolific cascade of handbag designs, including the irresistible “LOVE.” Collins founded her studio after World War II with her husband, Frederic, an engineer and sculptor who



“LOVE” wooden box purse by Enid Collins for Collins of Texas, 1968



“Enid Collins: Queen of Kitsch?” Seminar - 3

collaborated on designs and fashioned hand-cast bronze elements for their fine-leather lines. By 1966, Collins of Texas box bags and totes sparkled in department store windows from Fifth Avenue to Phoenix.

But back in Chicago in 2011, Adler, like many, had never heard of Enid Collins. And she had never seen anything as weirdly seductive as a Collins of Texas bejeweled bag.

“I liked the idea of painting with jewels,” she says, explaining that Collins’s artistry was part of the attraction from the start. “I liked the colors.”

But that’s not why she had to have it.

“It just made me happy.”

Back home in Colorado, Adler couldn’t stop thinking about her “LOVE” bag. Within months, she’d found another 50 purses and was soon accumulating more in order to learn about them and the woman who created them. A trained cultural anthropologist, she documented her finds to create a museum-grade record. Under the name, “Finding Enid with LOVE”, she launched a [website](#) and raised money to buy more pieces by selling refurbished duplicates and replacement jewels [online](#).

Today, her collection has grown to more than a thousand artworks, plus photos and documents such as vintage advertising.

Collins’s art is an academic focus for Adler, who has been exploring lines between kitsch, camp and fine art as part of her work toward a professional certificate in museology with the University of Colorado in Boulder.

It’s also the subject of [“Enid of Collins: Queen of Kitsch?”](#), a one-hour discussion Adler will present as part of [Arizona Tiki Oasis](#), the Mid-Century meet-up and marketplace being held at Hotel Valley Ho in Scottsdale April 28 through 30.

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“Enid Collins: Queen of Kitsch?” Seminar - 4



Her April 28 talk will explore how we experience and define Collins’s beguiling bags, and ask us to consider them from a new perspective.

The fevered desire for Collins’s work is driven by many factors, including the explosion of online resale shops such as Etsy and a booming interest in anything Mid-Century. But the endurance of the attraction over more than six decades, and that feeling of phenomenon so many people describe, suggests something more important, Adler says.

“Enid Collins took her art very seriously but she also understood the power of kitsch,” she says, adding that kitsch’s roots in pop and commercial culture often cause us to dismiss it as sentimental, garish, or “bad taste,” and miss its potential artistic functions.

Although Collins clearly designed products to appeal to consumers, Adler argues, she did so with an artistic sense that recognizes how art may exploit emotion to startle us out of mental ruts, spark curiosity and connect us with others – even across decades.

“Her art is about the emotional experience, the sometimes-ironic encounter with the object itself, rather than an artwork that inspires some deeper appreciation or higher contemplation,” she says. “Yes, it’s sentimental. But sentimentality comes from a very honest place, your heart. It’s not dogged or calculated. It’s who you are.”

Like Andy Warhol, Collins intended to create art that was fine yet not “serious,” Adler argues, a purpose evidenced in artistic choices we can trace in her bags today.

“Art like Enid’s ends up being labeled common, lowbrow and sentimental, especially since she was working outside of what counted as ‘high’ art; that is, architecture, painting and sculpture,” Adler says. “You’re making box bags for women? You’re going to be called low art. You have no choice. They don’t consider what you’re doing art at all. But Enid turned that around, made the ‘lowbrow’ high fashion.”

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“Enid Collins: Queen of Kitsch?” Seminar - 5



Collins trusted her audience to trust themselves when it came to art, she adds.

“Going with your own instincts, never minding who might disagree or call it ‘just kitsch’ – that’s how a new perspective on an artist can start,” she says. “Take the whole contemporary Tiki culture, how it has come into its own. All of these people trusted their judgment and said, ‘Hey! This is great stuff! *We* think this is amazing.’ And here we are.”

In addition to the presentation, Adler will offer a rare opportunity to view a large collection of original vintage Collins box bags and totes – and purchase them. Finding Enid with LOVE will operate a “Collinsiana Cabana” pop-up shop as part of the [Arizona Tiki Oasis Marketplace](#) from 4 to 6 p.m. April 28 and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. April 29. It will be located in the Cabana Room vending section along the hotel’s main OH Pool.

The April 28 sale is open only to those with a regular or deluxe Evening Resort Pass. The April 29 Market is free and open to the public.

- For \$20 seminar tickets: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/arizona-tiki-oasis-2023-seminar-tickets-tickets-534915295047>
- For more information about Finding Enid with LOVE: www.findingenidcollins.com.
- For Arizona Tiki Oasis passes, schedule and other information: www.aztikioasis.com

About Finding Enid with LOVE, L3C

Finding Enid with LOVE is a small social enterprise located in the Denver Colorado, area. It collects, researches, documents and curates the artworks of Enid Collins (1918-1990), a Mid-Century designer and entrepreneur whose name has become synonymous with the bejeweled box purses that made her a fashion legend. We seek to assemble a museum-quality collection of Collins

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“Enid Collins: Queen of Kitsch?” Seminar - 6

original artworks so that we may illuminate her significance as an American decorative artist, fashion designer and Mid-Century female entrepreneur. Today, the physical collection includes more than 800 original Enid Collins box bags and totes, plus other objects and documents. For a peek at the collection and more information, visit www.findingenidcollins.com.

About Karen Adler

Karen Adler has a multi-disciplinary background combining cultural anthropology, fine art, travel and journalism. She founded Finding Enid with LOVE in 2012 as a personal project after discovering a vintage 1968 Enid Collins LOVE box purse in a Chicago thrift store, and featuring Collins works in a “Tramped” show at her Niwot, Colo., manifest ART gallery. She completed doctoral study in cultural anthropology at the University of Colorado at Boulder, holds an M.A. in Cultural Anthropology from Northern Illinois University and a B.S. in Journalism and Spanish from Southern Illinois University. She is currently earning a Professional Certificate in Museology at the University of Colorado in Boulder. She also traveled with United Airlines for 20 years as a flight attendant. She makes her home near Denver, Colorado.

About Arizona Tiki Oasis

Arizona Tiki Oasis is a four-day celebration of Tiki and Mid-Century style. Tiki Oasis was founded upon values of architectural preservation and is proud to partner with Hotel Valley Ho, one of the most successful, exquisite examples of Mid-Century restoration and preservation in America. The Phoenix metropolitan area, known as “the Valley of the Sun,” has a long, rich history in Tiki style. The warm weather of Scottsdale and the amenities of this Four-Diamond resort will make the Arizona Tiki Oasis weekend a relaxed and luxurious experience.

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Looking for “LOVE”?

Arizona Tiki Oasis pop-up store will offer rare chance to shop scores of Enid Collins of Texas vintage bejeweled handbags offline and in person



“LOVE” mini box bag by Enid Collins for Collins of Texas, 1970.

DENVER, Colo. (April 10, 2023) — Anyone who covets the whimsical jewel-adorned vintage handbags created by Mid-Century designer Enid Collins knows that finding even one can be like discovering buried treasure.

Usually, the hunt happens online, as would-be buyers swipe through dubious images on e-commerce platforms, where bags that are rare or in good condition are quickly snatched up, often for hundreds of dollars.

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“Enid Collins: Queen of Kitsch?” Seminar - 2



As *New York Times* Styles Editor Alexandra Jacobs notes in her 2021 article, [“Is It Time for an Enid Collins Revival?”](#), the brilliantly spangled bags that once graced the windows of Saks and Nieman Marcus are now “perfect fits for the photo grids of eBay, Etsy, Pinterest and Instagram.”

But buying them virtually leaves a lot to chance.

Even when lucky enough to score one of the prized pocketbooks, shoppers may be in for a shock when their item arrives.

“Sometimes when I receive bags I’ve ordered online—let’s just say it: it’s a disappointment,” says Karen Adler, a Colorado cultural anthropologist who studies Collins’s work and since 2011 has been building a professional collection of nearly 600 original Collins-designed box bags and more than 200 totes.

“Even if you understand vintage well, there can still be problems you don’t expect because a lot can happen over 60 years,” she explains. “The handle leather is cracked. Latches or hinges are broken. They’re missing jewels. Sometimes, the bag’s not even useable. And there’s that mustiness. What you see online is not what you get.”

Since launching her small social enterprise, [Finding Enid with LOVE](#), a social enterprise Adler has conducted what she calls “purse anthropology” on bags that Collins created from the mid-1950s to 1972. Collecting and studying hundreds of physical artworks using direct observation and other professional methods, she’s become an expert at authenticating Collins works and identifying the deceptively simple-seeming faux-jewel patterns that made the designer famous from small-town Texas to Fifth Avenue.

She’s also helped people identify and replace missing jewels through [eBay](#) since 2011 and sold refurbished bags through [Etsy](#) since 2013. Highly rated on both platforms, she’s routinely praised for professionalism, knowledge and exceptional levels of quality and care.

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“Enid Collins: Queen of Kitsch?” Seminar - 3

As one cheeky reviewer put it, she’s “a ‘gem’ to do business with.”

Now, she’s bringing her glittery goods and expertise to Scottsdale.

To give Collins collectors and others an opportunity to see – and touch and smell — the real bejeweled-bag deal, Adler will hold a “Collinsiana Cabana” pop-up store as part of [Arizona Tiki Oasis](#), a four-day mega-meet-up of Tiki and Mid-Century style enthusiasts to be held at the end of April at Hotel Valley Ho.

Visitors to the shop will be able to browse scores of original Mid-Century box bags and totes by Collins of Texas, plus a selection of Enid-inspired imitators.

The shop will also offer signed copies of [“Enid,” a 2021 memoir](#) by Collins’s son, George Philip “Jeep” Collins, a jeweler based in Fredericksburg, Texas, not far from the family’s former ranch. The book braids excerpts from his mother’s correspondence and journals with personal memories about the curious mix of ranch life and high fashion.

In addition to the sparkle, color and hands-on feel of physical vintage Collins bags, the opportunity to experience so many together in one place is important, Adler notes.

“You almost never see them in bulk like this,” she says, adding that even auctions of collections are mostly held online now. “There’s so much to learn by seeing lots of them together. You get a better understanding of her design process, her worldview and her writing style.”

That experience is what Finding Enid with LOVE is all about, she says, adding that it may also be the secret something behind the Collins craze.

“What happened, over and over among those of us who love Enid Collins, is that it started with an accidental discovery of just one bag. But that one spoke to us, told us we had to have it because it was so strange and wonderful. Look at how taken we all were by just a single bag. Can you imagine walking into a whole room of them?”

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“Enid Collins: Queen of Kitsch?” Seminar - 4

Finding Enid with LOVE’s “Collinsiana Cabana” pop-up will run 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. April 29 as part of the event’s [free, public Marketplace](#). It will be located in the Cabana Room vending section adjacent to the OH Pool at Hotel Valley Ho, 6850 E. Main St., Scottsdale.

Those holding an Evening Resort Pass, which run from \$139 to \$299, can shop a special two-hour pre-sale from 4 to 6 p.m. April 28.

Adler will also present [“Enid Collins of Texas: Queen of Kitsch?”](#) a one-hour educational seminar looking at the artistry behind the handbag bling, to be held at 2 p.m. April 28 in the hotel’s Soho 2 room.

- For more information on Finding Enid with LOVE: www.findingenidcollins.com.
- For Arizona Tiki Oasis Marketplace, seminar and event information and ticketing: www.aztikioasis.com
- Finding Enid with LOVE on eBay (as manifestART): <https://www.ebay.com/usr/manifestart>
- Finding Enid with LOVE on Etsy: https://www.etsy.com/shop/findingENIDwithLOVE?ref=condensed_trust_header_title_reviews

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