

Authentic Austin: Tesoros

In the market for a fifty cent pin from Turkey that will ward off the evil eye? Or maybe a Mexican bottlecap mirror that retails for something closer to two hundred dollars? You can get both at Tesoros Trading Company. This Austin institution has both one of the nation's largest wholesale folk art businesses and a beloved retail store, (now located at 1500 S. Congress Ave.) At the retail store, you can browse through an amazing selection of treasures from around the world--and a return visit is always rewarding, since owner Jonathan Williams regularly travels abroad to refresh his stock and to work with the artists featured in his store.

What you'll find at Tesoros

If it's folk art you're looking for, what *won't* you find at Tesoros? Tesoros imports from more than 25 countries--in South, Central, and North America, the Caribbean, Africa, Europe, and Asia. You can find dozens upon dozens of tiny, inexpensive treasures like handcrafted magnets, notecards, figurines, milagros, and beads, or you can shop for larger items like decorative housewares, weavings, and ceramics, bags and purses, t-shirts, baskets, or dolls and toys. You can even shop by theme--if you're in the market for Lucha Libre or Day of the Dead art, Tesoros is the place to start your quest.

Tesoros's Austin spirit

As globalization makes it harder and harder for indigenous artists around the world to practice their traditional ways of life, Jonathan Williams wants to be able to offer them a way to make a stable income without giving up their traditional arts. In addition to selling folk art through Tesoros, Williams works with several nonprofits devoted to preserving local craft economies, and Tesoros supports the ideals of fair trade and ethical sourcing.

And Williams brings more than folk art into Austin--he often brings the artists as well. Tesoros hosts special events that offer Austinites the chance to meet and learn from folk artists from every corner of the globe. Check out the [Tesoros Website](#) for information on special events: they've hosted a Tibetan craft show, a Zimbabwean singer, special guests from [SXSW](#), textile artists from Turkey and Uzbekistan--and recently a reception for the internationally known Brazilian woodblock artist Jose Francisco Borges.

Bringing folk art and folk art education to Austin is such a priority for Williams that he has in the past loaned items from his collection to be shown at Austin's [Mexic-Arte Museum](#)--so even if you aren't at Tesoros, anytime you're looking at folk art in Austin, you just might be looking at something from Tesoros's collection.