



# *Marushka*

RANDY SMITH BRINGS  
HIS UNIQUE STYLE TO  
DOWNTOWN GRAND  
HAVEN

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Photos and Story by Phil Eich,  
Storyville Social, as part of the  
Michigan Main Street Story  
Series

"I opened my first business, a gift shop called ETC, in downtown Grand Haven when I was 18. I bought a building on a land contract for \$10,000 at \$1,000 down and for \$100 a month. The building still exists. There's a bank there now, and the birch tree I planted outside has grown to about 40 feet tall. When I was a young business owner, I used to have meetings with other businessmen. I remember going to lunch with them, and they would have pitchers of Manhattans and pitchers of martinis that I wasn't old enough to drink yet. I learned a lot from those guys.

My high school art teacher, Richard Sweet, started Marushka in 1971. The company began by doing large-scale graphics for the office partition and contract furniture industries.

When I started working with him in 1975, we began selling little hand-stretched fabric prints you would hang on the wall, and we sold those until about 1989.

Then we got into clothing, which we've been doing ever since. We've always hand-printed everything we do using water-based ink. To create a screenprint, you press ink through a stencil, and that leaves the image or portion of an image if there are multiple colors, on the garment or fabric.

Right now, there are over 35,000 possibilities of things you can buy out of this building. We have this retail store, an e-commerce site, and we do wholesale for about 400 little stores all over the country.

We also sell to a couple of major retail catalogs, and that's a big part of our business—items that go out the back door.

We auctioned off some of our old work recently. My wife and I were watching the news about Ukraine and, like everybody else, we wondered what we could do to help. Then she came up with the idea to auction off our old designs and posters. We did paper posters at one point, and we've done a lot of artwork over the year, so we hosted an online auction.

We generated about \$12,000, and it's all been sent to Ukraine."

—Randy Smith, owner of Marushka



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