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HandMade Design Expo Keynote Speaker Confirmed: Toni Sikes - Founder and Artistic Advisor, The Guild, Inc.

HandMade: The Western North Carolina Craft, Architecture & Design Expo is proud to present Toni Sikes as Keynote Speaker. Toni Sikes is the founder and visionary behind The Guild. She started the company in 1985 as a publisher of sourcebooks for design trade professionals to help artists find greater markets for their work. In 1998, she founded the GUILD.com website and catalog as a way of bringing artists' work directly to consumers.

HandMade in America, known for its successful efforts to establish Western North Carolina as the national destination for the handmade object, is launching a new event in June 2010. *HandMade: The Western North Carolina Craft, Architecture & Design Expo* will bring together craft entrepreneurs, architects, builders, designers and the public to experience the possibilities and access the resources for purchasing or commissioning an original work for the home. Through model rooms, home tours, workshops and presentations, and the Keynote, participants will be inspired and educated about integrating craft in the built environment.

The event will be held June 25 and 26 at The North Carolina Arboretum in Asheville. Tickets at \$15 per day or \$25 for both days will be available, along with additional information on the event web site at www.handmadeinamerica.org/designexpo.

Sikes will be featured as Keynote for the first annual *Craft, Architecture & Design Expo*, presented by Handmade in America on June 25 and 26, 2010. Engaging participants in a conversation about the creation of living and work spaces rich with details that reflect personal experience and a philosophy of life, Sikes will speak to all Expo participants on Friday June 25, 2010 5:30 p.m. at The North Carolina Arboretum.

In 2007, Sikes authored *The Artful Home: Using Art & Craft to Create Living Spaces You'll Love*. Published by Lark Books, a division of Sterling Publishing Company, this book established her as a national expert in the area of artful living. Sikes is also well known in the arts arena as an advocate for artists, is widely quoted in art and direct marketing publications, frequently lectures on marketing the arts, and juries art shows and exhibitions around the United States.

For 22 years, Sikes served as CEO of The Guild, growing the company to become the best national resource for connecting designers, architects, art consultants, public art administrators, and gallery managers with active, professional artists. The Guild Sourcebooks serve as resources for design

professionals and artists. GUILD.com and The Artful Home are among the leading sources for artist-made home décor. She continues to serve on the company's Board of Directors, as well as the boards of Craft Emergency Relief Fund (an organization committed to supporting the careers of craft artists throughout the United States), Aid To Artisans (an international craft organization focused on economic development), the Wisconsin Technology Council, and the Chazen Museum of Art. Sikes is also active in Wisconsin economic development organizations and has authored several books in addition to *The Artful Home*.

Today, Sikes serves as Senior Advisor to Gruppo, Levey & Co., a New York investment bank providing merger and acquisition, financial, and strategic advisory services to the direct marketing and e-commerce industries. Sikes heads the Gruppo Levey initiative to help young Internet companies raise venture capital. As founder and CEO of two companies, Sikes raised over \$52 million from venture capital firms on the east and west coasts.

She holds a B.S. in Mathematics from the University of Alabama and an M.S. in Market Research from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Additional information about Toni Sikes, *HandMade: The Western North Carolina Craft, Architecture & Design Expo*, and HandMade in America is available on the event web site at www.handmadeinamerica.org/designexpo.

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