



Works of art, you'll help keep traditions alive by buying these products.

global traditions



Integrity and beauty are the Fabric of Life, writes Belinda Jackson

Intricate hand woven or hand painted fabric from India, Africa and Australia lines the walls of this North Adelaide shop, which specialises in the sale and conservation of some of the world's most beautiful textiles.

"It's a lovely world, the textiles world," says owner Mary Jose, who has run this shop in Melbourne St for five years.

Mary travels overseas at least twice a year to establish and reaffirm relationships with those whose products she showcases in the shop.

The range draws from work discovered in women's collectives in Gujarat, India, to the townships of South Africa and the steppes of such little-known locales such as Uzbekistan

or far eastern Turkey. The shop is underpinned by the ethos of paying fair prices for artists' work and encouraging employment in underprivileged parts of the world.

Much of the work, such as the *suzani* (embroidered wall hangings) from central Asia, replicate traditional designs.

"We've seen people selling their heirlooms, such as embroideries that were made for their dowries," says Mary of some of her experiences during her far-reaching travels.

"It's so sad, but they have to have money to eat."

By encouraging textiles industries in such areas, those people keep their heritage alive without giving away their most precious belongings.

On the home front, Fabric of Life sources and sells traditional art and craftwork from Ernabella Arts (www.ernabellaarts.com.au), high up on the South Australia-Northern Territory border, where Anangu women weave spinifex and other natural products into highly individual artefacts.

What is most refreshing about the shop is the products' integrity, and the fact that you really, genuinely, would find it difficult to buy these pieces elsewhere.

"The things we collect are not easy to collect," Mary says.

Fabric of Life, 141 Melbourne St, North Adelaide 8361 7965, closed Wednesdays and Sundays, www.fabricoflife.com.au.