

Consequences of Selling Counterfeits



By Patti Acquisto

One day several customers were standing at our counter and one asked, “Did you see the excitement at that shop a block away? The police were all over the place!” Seems two ladies opened a shop and highly advertised all of the top designer names you know and cherish. However, their shop was filled with “top design name” counterfeits. They actually have operated a store on the edge of town for about two years and then they opened this one downtown—the stores are not resale shops.

It seems the manufacturers are fed up with this illegal activity and are apparently reporting anyone engaged in manufacturing or selling merchandise with their branding. According to the local gossip, some designer was alerted and took advantage of the IACC (International Anticounterfeiting Coalition) Website where you can report counterfeits confidentially. (www.iacc.org/reportfakes.php) Within less than one week, the local city police, detectives and the county sheriff’s department were at the door.

They confiscated \$40,000 in merchandise and \$10,000 in cash. They also found a bit of marijuana. Out the door they came with the women, the cash registers, the computers, the money, the grass . . . and ALL the purses. These two ladies went to jail and were charged with a Class D Felony. They will be indicted by the Grand Jury and also have to face the drug charge. Having several purses is a misdemeanor but possession of many is a Class D Felony. I don’t know the magic number that makes the charge jump from misdemeanor to felony.

What scurrying about town! Every little boutique, salon and resale/consignment shop in town began snatching their fakes off of the shelves and out of the windows. Telephones were ringing like crazy as shoppers warned their favorite shop owners.

The television station came to my store and asked us how we deal with the fakes. I told them our National Association of Resale and Thrifts Shops had told us long ago not to sell counterfeit merchandise. Other shops in the area are not NARTS members and have paid no attention to the law. They aimed their cameras at our purse display and asked me if we had any fakes. Of course, we didn’t, thanks to NARTS.

I spoke with one of the investigators and he told me they had recently busted another shop for the same thing. They take everything you have. They close your shop. He said people think having a purse party or selling some knock-off merchandise is just fun. He talked about it being organized crime and the money is filtered to drug cartels and terrorist organizations, which is exactly what our Executive Director has been telling us for years.

If you have not read “The Facts on Fakes!” recently, it can be found in the Members Only and Shopping Guide sections of our Website. The article has a link to the IACC site for reporting counterfeits and also to Harper’s Bazaar “Fakes Are Never In Fashion™” campaign which is dedicated to exposing the criminal activities connected to the sale of counterfeit luxury goods.

If you think you are safe from the consequences of selling counterfeits you had better pay attention. I saw it happen and this is serious!