

SHEAR INGENUITY ▶

Grace Bowmer and Ben Machin **Tamarack Tunis**
and **Vermont Heritage Wool Company** *Corinth*

AS THEY EXPAND THEIR FLOCK to meet a strong demand for pasture-raised meat, a young couple is also finding a creative outlet for their wool.

Grace Bowmer and Ben Machin both grew up near the land on which they now raise cinnamon-faced Tunis and striking Horned Dorsets, rare breeds inherited from Machin's grandfather and great-grandfather. Machin, a forester and natural resources consultant, and Bowmer, who earned a degree focused in art and architecture, are motivated by their desire to contribute to a healthy working landscape while building a business that demonstrates the value of versatile heritage breeds.

"We have to shear our animals every year," explains Bowmer. "We can take that wool and compost it, or we can sell it for less than it costs to shear, or we can try to find a value-added product we're proud of that helps our bottom line." Fortunately, Bowmer was close family friends with Susan Dollenmaier, founder-owner of Anichini, a global brand of luxury textiles and home furnishings based in Tunbridge. Dollenmaier had an early influence on Bowmer's appreciation of beautifully designed and crafted goods, and together, they have created a hand-tied, Vermont heritage wool-filled comforter covered in Italian linen jacquard.

These "heirlooms of the future," says Dollenmaier, will be made-to-order for about \$2,500, which reflects their detail-oriented, handmade aesthetic. Bowmer and Machin hope the comforters are the first in a product line that helps bring back Vermont wool, an heirloom of the past.



emblazoned with his vibrant images of cultural icons like Marilyn Monroe, a classic boom box and Tupac Shakur.

After life on the road, Thompson returned to finish his studies at Champlain College where, he says, graphic arts classes opened his horizons to the bold, eye-popping, Andy Warhol-inspired kind of art "I always knew I wanted to make, but didn't know how to make." A debut art show led to what he dubbed "T-shirts for the urban generation" and a Church Street retail clothing store, which he and a business partner recently sold.

Today, Thompson's art is represented by a Brooklyn gallery, and his Steez designs — sold through stores like Target and Urban Outfitters, and in Europe — are on everything from tapestries to shower curtains to T-shirts. "The thing about my art is it can pretty much be emblazoned on anything," he says. "The images catch your eye." 🌟

