

# Arte ni Juana turns indigenous weaves into modern handbags

By Edg Adrian A. Eva  
Reporter

ARTE NI JUANA, a Cebu-based fashion brand, is carving out a niche in local and overseas markets by turning traditional Filipino weaving into modern handbags while providing steady income to women artisans across the Visayas.

Founded by designer Ma. Jo-ann I. Comedido, Arte ni Juana works with women weavers to produce contemporary bags using indigenous materials such as *tikog*, rattan and abaca.

The brand aims to pair traditional craft with designs that appeal to modern consumers, while keeping production rooted in local communities.

“When you purchase our bag, you do not just own a beautifully crafted piece; it has a soul, and it is made by women,” Ms. Comedido said in an interview via Microsoft Teams.

The idea for the brand emerged in 2020, at the height of the pandemic, when Ms. Comedido was struggling to keep her restaurant business afloat.

She started with a single bag made from *tikog*, an indigenous reed grass woven by women artisans in Samar.

The response encouraged her to pursue the concept more seriously, leading her to establish Arte ni Juana in 2021. By 2023, she had closed her food business to focus full time on the fashion venture.

Arte ni Juana now works with about 50 artisans, most of them women, from seven communities across Cebu, Bohol, Negros Island and Samar.



EDG ADRIAN A. EVA

Two of these partner communities are within correctional facilities, where weaving provides both livelihood and skill development.

The brand’s main products are handbags, though it also produces home décor and functional crafts. Each bag typically passes through the hands of about five artisans, who handle weaving, embroidery and leatherwork.

Artisans also contribute ideas to the design process, helping shape products that reflect both tradition and creativity. The brand produces roughly 100 pieces a month.

Designs are intentionally playful and colorful. “They are fun, vibrant, and playful, inspired by my childhood and the

environment where I grew up,” Ms. Comedido said.

Arte ni Juana has been expanding its footprint in tourist-heavy areas, with pop-up stores often set up in hotels in Boracay, Cebu and Bohol.

Its products have also reached customers abroad, including in the US, New Zealand, South Korea and Malaysia.

Challenges persist. Typhoons disrupt production in some weaving communities, while security concerns in parts of Bohol affect artisans’ ability to work consistently.

Ms. Comedido said stronger government action is needed to protect livelihoods threatened by conflict and natural disasters.

Despite these risks, she remains optimistic about growth

this year, with plans for more designs and deeper engagement with overseas buyers, including clients in Australia and South America.

The brand also plans to expand to Palawan, Davao and Manila, though logistics remains a constraint.

Ms. Comedido said empowering women has a multiplier effect. “If you empower five women, 10 stay-at-home women benefit — it’s like empowering a whole community,” she said.

Women made up 70% of the global handicraft workforce, according to the International Trade Centre. In countries like India and Bangladesh, the number rises to 80%, particularly in rural areas.



REUTERS

## Shopee says Visayas-Mindanao expansion to support 1,500 jobs

SHOPEE PHILIPPINES said its expanding operations in the Visayas and Mindanao (VisMin) would support about 1,500 jobs this year, as the e-commerce platform deepens its logistics and seller support outside major urban centers.

The company is strengthening regional capabilities to improve delivery speed and make it easier for local sellers to reach customers across islands.

“Making e-commerce work for the whole country means continuing to build capabilities that serve both buyers and sellers wherever they live,” Vincent Lee, head of Shopee Philippines, said in a statement on Monday.

“Our focus in the Visayas and Mindanao builds on years of work to make buying and selling online easier and more reliable, while improving access for communities outside major urban centers,” he added.

Moving goods across islands remains a key constraint for online sellers, affecting delivery times and customer reach, Shopee said.

To address this, the company is expanding its Fulfilled by Shopee program, which lets sellers store inventory in Shopee-supported warehouses. Orders are then packed and shipped by Shopee’s logistics network.

“By easing fulfilment complexity, Fulfilled by Shopee helps sellers focus on growing their business, from improving prod-

ucts and pricing competitively to serving customers more consistently,” the company said.

For buyers, the program improves product availability and reduces dependence on long, cross-island delivery routes, it added.

Shopee said average delivery times for Visayas and Mindanao orders have fallen to about three days from roughly seven days after sellers adopted the service.

The company expects the expansion to support employment across platform operations, logistics and seller enablement roles.

These include jobs linked to warehousing, order processing and programs that help small businesses participate more effectively in e-commerce.

Shopee has been investing in regional infrastructure as competition intensifies among online platforms and as demand grows outside Metro Manila.

The company said strengthening Visayas and Mindanao operations is part of a broader push to make online commerce more accessible nationwide, particularly for small and medium-sized sellers based outside key cities.

“Shopee expects its VisMin operations to support around 1,500 employment opportunities by 2026, across platform operations and seller enablement roles that support participation and growth within the e-commerce ecosystem,” it said. — **Justine Irish D. Tabile**

# Gold, silver slide anew; CME hikes margin

GOLD and silver prices continued to fall on Monday as higher margin requirements at CME Group compounded last week’s sharp sell-off following the nomination of Kevin M. Warsh as the next US Federal Reserve chair.

Spot gold was down 4.8% at \$4,630.59 an ounce by 1:32 p.m. ET (1832 GMT), after tumbling nearly 10% earlier in the session. US gold futures for April delivery settled 1.9% lower at \$4,652.60 an ounce.

Bullion tumbled 9.8% on Friday, and has shed about \$900 from its Jan. 29 record high of \$5,594.82, erasing most of this year’s gains.

“Gold and silver are on a rollercoaster ride and when you get to the top of the ‘lift hill,’ gravity takes over and you are heading down,” said SP Angel analyst John Meyer.

Spot silver fell 9.2% to \$76.81 an ounce, after sliding as much as 15% earlier in the session. Silver has dropped roughly 37% since hitting a record high of \$121.64 last week.

Despite the rout, analysts cautioned against reading the move as the start of a prolonged downturn.

“The conditions do not appear primed for a sustained reversal in gold prices,” said Michael Hsueh, precious metals analyst at Deutsche Bank, in a note, adding that investors “remain highly bid for upside,” pointing to continued volatility rather than a collapse in sentiment.

CME Group said on Friday it would raise margin requirements on precious metal futures, with the changes taking effect after Monday’s market close.

Spot platinum fell by 3.3% to \$2,091.38 per ounce, while palladium shed 1.4% to \$1,673.70. — **Reuters**

## SPOT PRICES MONDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2026

METAL	
PALLADIUM free \$/troy oz	1,752.88
PALLADIUM JMI base, \$/troy oz	1,745.00
PLATINUM free \$/troy oz	2,169.92
PLATINUM JMI base \$/troy oz	2,145.00
KRUGGERAND, fob \$/troy oz	4,673.00
IRIDIUM, whs rot, \$/troy oz	6,640.00
RHODIUM, whs rot, \$/troy oz	10,840.00

GRAINS (January 29, 2026) (FOB Bangkok basis at every Thursday)	
FRAGRANT (100%) 1 <sup>st</sup> Class, \$/ton	1,212.00
FRAGRANT (100%) 2 <sup>nd</sup> Class, \$/ton	1,178.00
RICE (5%) White Thai- \$/ton	412.00
RICE (10%) White Thai- \$/ton	410.00
RICE (15%) White Thai- \$/ton	409.00
RICE (25%) White Thai- \$/ton (Super)	409.00
BROKER RICE A-1 Super \$/ton	383.00

FOOD	
COCOA ICCO DILY (SDR/mt)	3,003.19
COCOA ICCO \$/mt	4,150.02
COFFEE ICA comp 2001 cts/lb	283.02
SUGAR ISA FOB Daily Price, Carib. port cts/lb	13.99
SUGAR ISA 15-day ave.	14.49

LIFFE COFFEE New Robusta 10 MT - \$/ton				
	High	Low	Sett	Psett
Mar.	4,112	4,003	4,029	4,113
May	4,033	3,932	3,952	4,037
July	3,945	3,855	3,869	3,937
Sept.	3,874	3,795	3,808	3,862

LIFFE COCOA (Ldn)-10 MT-E/ton				
	High	Low	Sett	Psett
Mar.	3,021	2,765	2,997	2,913
May	3,034	2,801	3,011	2,953
July	3,058	2,847	3,036	2,993
Sept.	3,081	2,887	3,059	3,028

COCONUT MANILA COPRA (based on 6% moisture)	
Peso/100kg	Buyer/Seller
Lag/Qzn/Luc 25	7,750.00/7,800.00
Philippine Coconut Oil - Crude	
CIF NY/NOLA	120.50
FOB RAIL/NOLA	127.50
COCONUT OIL (PHIL/IDN), \$ per ton,	
CIF Europe	
Feb./Mar.'26	0.00/2,210.00
Mar./Apr.'26	0.00/2,205.00
Apr./May'26	0.00/2,195.00
May/June'26	0.00/2,185.00

LONDON METAL EXCHANGE LME FINAL CLOSING PRICES, US\$/MT 3 MOS	
ALUMINUM H.G.	3,056.00
ALUMINUM Alloy	2,509.00
COPPER	12,891.50
LEAD	1,963.00
NICKEL	16,827.00
TIN	46,591.00
ZINC	3,323.50

# Oil prices extend plunge on easing supply worries

NEW YORK — Oil prices fell more than \$3 per barrel on Monday after US President Donald J. Trump said Iran was “seriously talking” with Washington, signaling a de-escalation of tensions with the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) member, while a stronger dollar and milder weather forecasts also pressured prices.

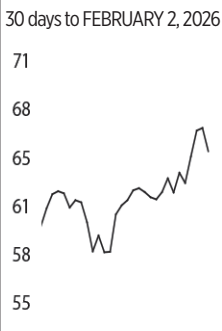
Brent crude futures fell \$3.02, or 4.4%, to settle at \$66.30 per barrel, while US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures fell \$3.07, or 4.7%, to \$62.14 per barrel.

Iran and the US will resume nuclear talks on Friday, officials from both countries told Reuters.

On Saturday, Mr. Trump told reporters that Iran was “seriously talking,” hours after Tehran’s top security official Ali Larijani said arrangements for negotiations were underway.

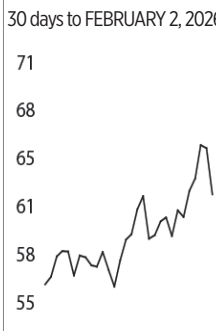
The US president had repeatedly threatened Iran with inter-

## ASIA-DUBAI (FEBRUARY CONTRACT)



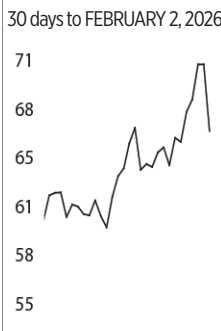
DOLLARS PER BBL						
Jan.	27	28	29	30	2	
\$/bbl	62.88	64.66	66.35	66.53	64.99	
Average (February 2) \$64.99						
Average (January 2-30) \$64.73						

## NEW YORK-WTI (MARCH CONTRACT)



DOLLARS PER BBL						
Jan.	27	28	29	30	2	
\$/bbl	62.39	63.21	65.42	65.21	62.14	
Average (February 2) \$62.14						
Average (January 2-30) \$60.26						

## LONDON-BRENT (APRIL CONTRACT)



DOLLARS PER BBL						
Jan.	27	28	29	30	2	
\$/bbl	67.57	68.40	70.71	70.69	66.30	
Average (February 2) \$66.30						
Average (January 2-30) \$61.97						

Source: REUTERS

vention if it did not agree to a nuclear deal or if it continued killing protesters. The threats underpinned oil prices throughout January, said Phillip Nova analyst Priyanka Sachdeva.

The US dollar also strengthened as currency traders cheered Mr. Trump’s nomination of Kevin M. Warsh as the next US Federal Reserve chair. A stronger dollar makes dollar-denominated oil

# S&P 500 surges as chipmakers and small caps jump

THE S&P 500 closed higher on Monday, lifted by gains in chipmakers and other companies related to artificial intelligence (AI), while smaller companies also rose sharply.

The Russell 2000 index jumped about 1%, with the small-cap index significantly outperforming the S&P 500 and Nasdaq so far in 2026.

Alphabet rose 1.9% to a record high and Amazon added 1.5%. Both companies are set to report quarterly results this week, giving investors an additional glimpse of the race to dominate AI technology.

AI-related data firm Palantir climbed 0.8% ahead of its quarterly report after the bell.

Chipmakers benefiting from AI-related demand for their components also rallied. SanDisk surged 15.4%, while Advanced Micro Devices rose 4% and Micron Technology added 5.5%.

It was the S&P 500’s first gain in three sessions following recent worries about pricey valuations of technology companies whose shares have soared in recent years on optimism about AI.

The S&P 500 is up about 2% in 2026, lagging the Russell 2000’s more than 6% rally.

Investors often view gains in small-cap stocks as a reflection of confidence in the economy.

“The fundamentals are good and earnings are strong. We have positive surprises both for revenues and earnings, pretty much across the board,” said Tim Ghriskey, senior portfolio strategist at Ingalls & Snyder in New York.

Analysts expect S&P 500 companies to have grown their earnings nearly 11% in the December quarter, up from an estimate of about 9% at the start of January, according to LSEG.

Technology-related companies are driving most of that growth.

Walt Disney tumbled 7.4%, despite posting quarterly earnings above Wall Street expectations, as it warned of a decline in international visitors to its US theme parks and a slump in earnings at its TV and film division.

The S&P 500 climbed 0.54% to end the session at 6,976.44 points, just short of its record high close of 6,978.60 last Tuesday.

The Nasdaq gained 0.56% to 23,592.11 points, while the Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 1.05% to 49,407.66 points.

Volume on US exchanges was heavy, with 20.1 billion shares traded, compared to an average of 19.4 billion shares over the previous 20 sessions.

US factory activity grew for the first time in a year in January, PMI data showed.

The CBOE VIX, a volatility index also known as Wall Street’s “fear gauge,” dropped 1 point to 16.5. During the session, it touched a near two-week high.

The S&P 500 energy sector index dropped 2% as oil prices slid. US President Donald J. Trump said Iran was “seriously talking” with Washington, comments that hinted at de-escalation and eased fears of supply disruptions.

Lower energy prices boosted airline shares. United Airlines, JetBlue, Delta Air Lines and Southwest all rallied between 4% and 8%.

The House of Representatives took up legislation to lift a partial government shutdown that began on Saturday, with a final vote expected on Tuesday.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics said the closely watched employment report for January would not be released on Friday due to the partial shutdown.

Advancing issues outnumbered falling ones within the S&P 500 by a 1.4-to-one ratio.

The S&P 500 posted 30 new highs and 9 new lows; the Nasdaq recorded 160 new highs and 217 new lows. — **Reuters**