

Los Angeles Times

ON THE INTERNET: WWW.LATIMES.COM
CIRCULATION: 1,111,285 DAILY / 1,384,688 SUNDAY

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 14, 2000
COPYRIGHT 2000 / CC / 124 PAGES

DAILY 25¢
DESIGNATED AREAS HIGHER

Web Firm Profits by Enriching Both Artisans and Buyers

■ **Imports:** Novica's strategy builds global markets for Third World goods with creators making more money, collectors paying less.

By LEE ROMNEY
TIMES STAFF WRITER

Conventional wisdom has it that social consciousness cuts into profits. But **Novica.com** is banking on a strategy that's equal parts humanitarian mission and raw capitalist logic.

The Los Angeles company brings the hand-made works of artisans around the globe to consumers at bargain prices. Its goal is twofold: to ramp up a profitable business while improving the economic prospects of isolated artists in some of the world's poorest pockets.

To that end, Novica has quickly grown to employ 132 people in 10 countries. The co-founders are a Stanford University alum with Peruvian roots, his Brazilian-born actress wife, and her mother, a former United Nations officer who is promot-

ing the works of some of the same people she helped as war-ravaged refugees.

Djembe drums from Ghana, mango wood pots from Thailand, Balinese sandstone sculpture, Brazilian oil paintings and Andean Ayacucho weaves are just some of the hand-crafted items sold through the site.

Novica's ideas aren't entirely unique: Web sites such as **Guild.com** and **Next-**

Monet.com sell domestic art. Others—including Seattle-based **World2-Market.com**, New York-based **OneNest.com** and Massachusetts-based **EZiba.com**—partially owned by **Amazon.com**—have launched recently to market the works of

Third World artisans. And nonprofits have long worked with collectives of weavers and other artisans to improve village economics in developing countries by selling goods abroad.

But Novica sets itself apart by



A wire cycle by Thomas Kazvizea of Zimbabwe is offered for \$39.31, plus shipping.



Photos by BOB CAREY / Los Angeles Times

To help Novica.com find craft items for its Web site, Catherine Ryan travels to remote corners of the world. Above she plays a finger piano from Zimbabwe.