

Living

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Taking the Long View Quicksilver Mine Co. survives its first 25 years

by Frank Robertson
Staff Writer

When Khysie Horn opened a craft gallery in Guerneville nearly 30 years ago she didn't really have a business plan.

"I wanted to stop commuting to the city," said Khysie, who opened her Quicksilver Mine Co. in a converted hardware store on Armstrong Woods Road in 1983.

She knew she was drawn to the River the way everyone is — by its look and feel and singular mix of natural beauty and cultural diversity.

"It was happenstance that I ended up there," said Khysie, who came to California from Boston. "I had moved out to California with the idea of maybe staying. I was exploring around and drove past this little house off Guerneville Road that I ended up buying."

Permanence may not be a word that comes to mind when we ponder the business of art. How many galleries, in Healdsburg, say, have been around 10 years? One?

The Ren Brown Collection opened in Bodega Bay almost 20 years ago. Lorenzo De Santis and his Bodega Landmark Studio have been representing Northern California artists for a long time. Christopher Queen, the Duncans Mills gallery, may have the most tenure. It opened in 1976.

Quicksilver opened in July of '83, offering things made in Sonoma County. Over the years it's moved a few times and evolved from a craft store to a fine art gallery. In its permanent Forestville home it now represents dozens of Northern California painters and sculptors and sells books by local writers and poets. Two years ago, Khysie helped launch the Sonoma County Gallery Group that promotes and supports Sonoma County arts.

Frank Robertson: Why did you open Quicksilver Mine Co. way back then? What were you shooting for?

KH: One of the places that I liked a lot when I was exploring Northern California was a shop called Made in Mendocino. I don't think it's there anymore. It was in Hopland. It was a co-op. Everything was made in Mendocino County — it was basically handcrafts. I thought it was a really neat concept. So I ended up going around Sonoma County with a little notebook wondering if it would be possible to put together a little shop around everything made in Sonoma County.

That was the notion — having all locally made things. Part of the focus was that we would keep the money local and support arts and crafts. That was really the driving force behind Quicksilver.

The whole concept of the store for the first 20 years was that everything was made in Sonoma County. I had food and wine and handcrafts. When I moved across the street in '86 it was the first time I had a dedicated gallery space.

FR: Who were some of the first artists you showed? How did you connect with them?

KH: I put together a little committee of artists that I knew. We would do annual calls and these dedicated six or eight people would sit with me and we would go through piles and piles of art, all local, all Sonoma County people. Initially I started showing people from the west county and river area and as the word got out I began to expand. Raymond Barnhart was very influential in helping to recommend people and suggest that people contact me. So it just kind of grew.

FR: Is it always the case that a gallery has far more artists wanting to be shown than it can accommodate?

KH: Definitely. Galleries generally speaking aren't money-making businesses. I would imagine there are a lot more artists looking for spaces that are viable than there are spaces to show them. It runs the gamut. Every gallery is a



FOR ART'S SAKE - Khysie Horn in her Forestville gallery.

Frank Robertson

reflection of the people who run it. I can't show nearly as many people as I would like to.

FR: I'm assuming that Quicksilver, as a business, is a success.

KH: It's had its ups and downs. But I'm very stubborn. Part of how we've done it all these years is the artists have contributed to the promotion cost of the shows, the printing and the postage and the graphics for the post cards, which can be a significant expense. Shows can cost from \$900 to \$1100 just for the direct expenses related to them not counting other kinds of promotions, not counting any advertising I do in the papers or anything like that. So the artists have supported that since the beginning.

FR: Is that unusual?

KH: Often galleries that are artist-owned, it's a different view. Meg [Hitchcock] at Mesh Gallery [in Sebastopol] is an example. She wanted to pay for everything for the artists because she felt that artists had a hard enough go of it and they shouldn't have to pay for show expenses. But what ended up happening is she couldn't afford to have shows anymore. She sold the business and moved to New York. We would have discussions about that because I felt that it was a big loss not to have Mesh exhibiting work. The artists who can't afford it or don't want to do it obviously don't have to show there. But I always thought it cushioned the ongoingness of a gallery. If you don't sell anything or you only sell a few pieces, you know, the artists and I are sharing that expense. In return we have a lower gallery commission, so that if they sell work here during a show they get more money, and hopefully recoup their expenses.

FR: What comes to mind when you compare then, when you first opened, and now?

KH: I'm much more focused now on the business of art, obviously, because it's a gallery now and not a store. In Guerneville, in that little tiny location, there were a lot of things going on in the community there where I was really part of the fabric of that community. We had the formaldehyde spill, and then the sewage spill, and the epidemic was going on and there were all kinds of things happening that were really radical ... they were heady times mixed with tragedy and positive changes driving the town. There was a lot of shared camaraderie.

FR: I remember going to your gallery openings in there, and listening to Ben Hill play the vibes.

KH: Ben and Marigold Hill, and Benny Barth and Gary Digman. When I had my first grand

opening in 1983 they played for me outside on the grass at Cinnabar. When I had my 10-year anniversary I had Ben Hill and I think it was Benny Barth, playing out in the gravel parking lot. And when I moved here Ben put together a little quartet that played in the garden in back.

FR: What made you decide to leave Sebastopol and relocate in Forestville?

KH: Because this building went on the market, and I bought it. Which was sort of a shock to me because I wasn't really planning to. Leslie [Zumwalt] had a frame shop next door and I knew it was going on the market. I was burned out with the gift shop. I thought, what do I really want to do? And I realized that over the years I was really becoming more and more interested in the fine art realm of what I was doing and I was tired of the gift shop. And this building had all the components.

FR: How carefully do you pay attention to what's happening in other local galleries?

KH: The Sonoma County Gallery Group is really neat in that it gives a sort of physical presence to something that I know I felt, and a lot of the other gallery people who were involved in organizing that felt, that we have strength in numbers and unity of the galleries. There's a richness to that and a lot of opportunities for people to go see art. They can see there are a lot of galleries in Sonoma County doing lots of interesting different things. There's a shared networking that happens. I think that level of communication is something that I've always believed in.

It's also a nice way to connect some of the geographic areas of the county which can get isolated. So I do feel connected. And when you're far-flung, here in Forestville, or somebody out in Valley Ford or wherever, the need for networking becomes much more apparent.

FR: Is the current economic situation having a noticeable effect on the art world?

KH: Yes. Absolutely. We lost some members of the gallery group when we renewed this year. Some people didn't rejoin because they were cutting their budget.

FR: As far as the number of galleries in Sonoma County today compared to when you started, it must be a pretty dramatic increase.

KH: Yes. There's a lot more, although they're struggling.

FR: Has any West County gallery been around longer than Quicksilver?

KH: Bodega Landmark. Lorenzo De Santis. He's got more mileage.



SUMMER STAGES

Join your neighbors in our town centers each week

Healdsburg Plaza

431-1956 or
www.healdsburg.com/
visitors/events

Tuesdays in the Park 6-8pm

Aug 12: Poor Man's Whiskey - Not-your-Daddy's-bluegrass.

Aug 19: Henry Butler - classic New Orleans piano.

Sebastopol Plaza

829-4797 or www.sebarts.org.

14th Annual Sebastopol Plaza Performance Series 6:30-8pm

Aug 7: Dgiin - French Gypsy music.

Aug 14: Shar Garn - Indie folk music.

Windsor Town Green

838-1260 or
www.townofwindsor.com.

Farmers market and classic car show start at 5pm.

Aug 7: Charlie Musselwhite - Delta blues king returns to charm the crowds with his harmonica skills, raw vocals, and acclaimed songwriting. 6pm.

Aug 14: Guy Richards

- keyboardist opens Moonlight Movie Classics - a classic movie begins at dusk. Tonight: a zany comedy starring Julie Andrews, Mary Tyler Moore, and Carol Channing.

Cloverdale Plaza

894-4410 or
www.cloverdaleartsalliance.org.

Friday Night Live at 7:30pm

Aug 8: Marjo Wilson Band - original and eclectic Americana.

Aug 15: Mambo This! - Afro-Latin salsa.

WINE WORDS



by Millie
Howie

A young winery in an old setting

Freestone. No, the tiny town on the west Sonoma Coast called by that name is not honoring a plump, juicy peach, but recalls the early days of the settlement when a nearby quarry of easily-extracted sandstone provided the principal building material for the pioneering residents. Founded in 1853, Freestone served as a rail terminus when the North Pacific

railroad came to town and the hamlet flourished as a trade center attracting a number of entrepreneurs who erected picturesque homes and shops, many of which are still serving the populace and drawing growing numbers of visitors to the area.

Over the decades, as the countryside changed, the residents worked to preserve the historic integrity and community feel of the attractive reminder of the past. So successful were they that, in 1974, the Sonoma County Planning Department recommended that Freestone be declared an "Historic District," referring to it as "a living example of an unspoiled 19th Century rural community."

To this historic District in 1999 came the Joseph Phelps Vineyards (JPV) team, producers of Insignia, the

remarkable, proprietary red Bordeaux blend created by Joe Phelps in 1974.

On their new property, on the rolling hillsides above Freestone, the Phelps team started planting Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. The following year, additional land was purchased and named Quarter Moon Vineyard. Planting continued, and today a total of 82 acres of Pinot Noir and 18 acres of Chardonnay climb in stately rows across the fertile rises.

In the fall of 2005, the Phelps team broke ground for its Freestone Winery, and construction was completed in time for the 2007 harvest. The first Pinot Noir from the Freestone Vineyards was released in 2004 under the Fogdog label.

From the beginning the Freestone properties have been farmed biodynamically,

emphasizing natural farming practices that encourage regional characteristics to express themselves in the wine. The Freestone Vineyards staff consider themselves stewards of the earth, committed to crafting wines that authentically reflect the structure, balance and complexity inherent in Sonoma Coast terroir.

Because the winery's use permit was for a production facility only, a picturesque building on the corner of Bodega and Bohemian Highways was transformed into a welcoming guest center. The address is 12747 El Camino Bodega, Freestone, CA 95472. There is a \$10 fee for tasting five wines and special benefits are provided for members of the Freestone Vineyards Private Collection Club.

"The Guest Center is

designed to evoke the spirit of community. There are no flashy signs. We just want to build the community, not splash our name around," says director of sales and hospitality Kim Jackson. "We encourage our guests to make themselves comfortable. In the cooler weather we all sit around a table on wicker chairs and warm the room with a propane stove. On lovely afternoons we suggest our visitors might enjoy a picnic lunch at a table in a cathedral grove of old redwoods at the edge of the property. We don't give tours, but we enjoy talking about the grapes and our stewardship of the land and it's always rewarding to see how people respond to our family spirit. We have always farmed biodynamically," Kim explains, "working with our consultant Pascal Marchand."

"We are very kid and dog friendly and the youngsters love learning about our unique farming methods such as planting by planetary influences and brewing up our fertilizing 'teas.' Our plans for the near future include educational seminars for both kids and adults."

Open hours at the Guest Center are Friday through Monday from 11:00 a.m. till 5:00 p.m. The wines are only available at the Guest Center and some local restaurants. The current releases include 2007 Fogdog Rose of Pinot Noir, 2005 Fogdog Chardonnay, 2005 Fogdog Pinot Noir, 2005 Freestone Pinot Noir and 2006 Ovation Chardonnay. For directions to the Guest Center call 707-874-1010.