

A bit of art in Cuero

Editor's note: Your Money, Your Business showcases small businesses. If you have a small business or know of an interesting one, please let us know. See the end of this feature for submission information.

■ **Business name:**

Courtyard Gallery

■ **Address and phone number:**

210 N. Esplanade St., Cuero
361-275-9111,
www.courtyardgallery-
ofcuero.com

■ **Business owner:**

Robert and Kerry Rhotenberry

■ **Date opened:**

Oct. 6, 2006

■ **Number of employees:**

One, plus a great circle of family and friends, along with the occasional kind stranger, who help on a regular basis

■ **Services offered:**

Original fine art, music and books from South Central Texas artists, musicians, and authors. We also offer the "Third Saturday in Cuero" Acoustic Jam, CD releases, premieres and facilities for private parties and

weddings

1: Why did you choose the industry?

We sort of fell into it. We kept meeting these amazing, creative people who did not have a forum to bring their work to the public. At the same time, we had this

CUERO: Sometimes it pays to just enjoy your life

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great

old 1896 downtown building we were in the process of rehabilitating. It seemed a perfect match.

2: Describe your first day in business.

It was a whirlwind of activities and the place was crazy busy. We were having a party and were behind schedule on both finishing the space and the party preparations. Oddly enough, things have not changed much.

3: Describe a typical workday.

It's tough - hanging out, visiting, moving stuff around. One of the great things about working in an art gallery is that there is always something different happening and someone new coming in the door. Most of our exhibits change monthly, so pieces come on an almost daily basis.

4: Why open up shop in the Crossroads region?

This area is significant in that we're a destination point for so many people whose recipe for stress relief includes a weekend at their country place. For others, we're a halfway point to the coast. It's good to be located on the way to someplace else.

5: Is it difficult to find employees in our workforce? How do you find workers?

We have been fortunate in having dedicated artists, customers and friends able to help on a regular basis with both the shop and with special events. Most folks like to work here. It's a fun place to connect with others and be exposed to a variety of creative expressions.

6: What advice would you give others starting a new business?

Evaluate the needs of the community and determine what niche you can fill. Plan, plan, evaluate, plan, evaluate and then do it all again. Be willing to discard ideas or systems that prove unwieldy or too complicated and be open to exploring new directions

and opportunities that present themselves.

7: What is the biggest challenge your industry faces?

Those that appreciate the value of original work will continue to do so. We all hunger for the things that stimulate our hearts, minds, and imaginations. That being said, revenue streams for the arts have always been sensitive to economic downturn and the current climate will have to be weathered.

8: What is something most people don't realize about running a small business?

The first is that the old chestnut is really, truly, true - the time commitment is absolute. This can be a somewhat daunting challenge when home and family are your top priority. Another is that plans which include catching up on paperwork during working hours are doomed.

9: In your time running your business, what is your best story?

One pretty day, for fun, instead of "Back tomorrow at 11:00," our sign said, "Being held hostage by sock monkeys, please leave ransom money in mail slot to ensure my safe return." There was a dollar on the floor! Sometimes it pays to just enjoy your life.

10: Where do you see yourself and your business in five years?

Continually changing and diversifying both our mix and our presentation to the public. Additionally, the Internet is already having a huge impact on our small business and we are only utilizing a fraction of those resources. The sky is the limit in regard to electronic commerce.

- Allison Miles, *Victoria Advocate*

To be considered for the Your Money, Your Business feature, call 361-580-6511 or e-mail Business Reporter Allison Miles at amiles@vicad.com. The form is also available electronically.

