

Fine jewelry to celebrate 20 years

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(Photo: Barbara Hootman)

Visions of Creation, which sells fine art jewelry designed by Robert Vengoechea at its 100 Cherry Street location, is celebrating 20 years of business in Black Mountain.

There will be a party to celebrate two decades of calling Black Mountain home for Vengoechea's fine art jewelry on Sept. 24 with special sales. The party will be at the jewelry store from 6-8 p.m. The details of the party are being decided and will be announced.

"Robert creates the jewelry and I sell it," June Vengoechea (Robert's wife) said. "We have a good partnership."

Robert and June met in Miami, Florida in 1989 when June brought a piece of jewelry to Robert for repair. They married in 1991.

"I had to tell her that it wasn't worth repairing because it wasn't made of gold as she thought it was," Robert said. "I asked her to go with me for a drink, and she refused. Then she called the jewelry store the next day and said I'll take you for dinner, and then you can take me for a drink after dinner. As they say the rest is history."

Vengoechea learned his craft working in a fine art jewelry store in Miami.

"The owner told me to watch his lead designer and learn," Vengoechea said. "I couldn't speak or understand much English but I could learn from watching her. He told me that he wanted a designer that could make at least four designs a day. After watching the designer for three days I could make 7 designs in 9 hours. When the owner returned he told me that I was going to stay with him in his business, and that he would house, feed and pay me. I had the ability and my designs were different, so I couldn't say that I wouldn't work for him."

Joan was working as a legal secretary in Miami when she met Robert.

"I've spent the last 20 years promoting and selling Robert's fine jewelry," she said. "We participate in craft and art shows, run Visions of Creation, and Robert produces what is sold."

Robert is a member of Southern Highland Craft Guild (lifetime juried guild), Piedmont Craftsmen, Carolina Designer (lifetime juried guild) Craftsmen, Handmade in America and Tennessee Craft (formerly TACA-Tennessee Arts and Crafts Association).

"It is no small feat for a fine art jewelry craftsman to be selected into the prestigious guilds," June said. "Being a member of the guilds validates the quality of Robert's work, and craftsmanship that goes into it. It is very hard to get into the guilds."

Robert enjoys commissioned work because he creates one-of-a-kind jewelry. Vengoechea's designer collection of jewelry illustrates his unusual architectural shapes which push the boundaries of "thinking out of the box."



Visions of Creation will celebrate 20 years of business in Black Mountain on Sept 24. June and Robert Vengoechea are the owners. (Photo: BarbaraHootman)

One of Vengoechea's signature series includes the Mountain Ring, Mountain Pendant and Mountain Earring Set. These were created for the Black Mountain enthusiasts.

Vengoechea's creates custom designed wedding bands that he calls "coupling bands". The customer is encouraged to use heirloom stones, stones purchased elsewhere or to select favorite stones from his resources. The customer can create his/her own design. Symbols that are meaningful for the couple can be included. Wedding band sets are created in both gold and sterling silver.

Vengoechea participates in the Dogwood Arts Festival on Market Square, Knoxville, Tn., Centerfest Arts Festival in Durham, Art on Main during American Craft Week, Hendersonville, Southern Highland Craft Guild, Asheville, and Carolina Designer Craftsman/Carolina Artisan Craft Market in Raleigh.

Robert offers a "Make your own rings" workshop. From start to finish in his fully equipped studio two people per class can create their own hand-fabricated rings. No experience is necessary. The 8 hour class held in two-half days and includes all tools, silver and the participants' choice of select stones. It cost \$350 per person or \$650 per couple. There is champagne toast at the conclusion of the workshop. Call to schedule the hands-on-class or for more information 669-0065.

Mark the calendar for Sept. 24 to come to Visions of Creation Gallery in Black Mountain to celebrate with the Vengoecheas.

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