

Annieglass Mixes Art With Good Business

IN 1981, Ann Morhauser rented a small art studio at the Old Sash Mill, which she shared with a painter to help pay the rent. It was a financial burden, but firing her glass dinnerware in a kiln in her guest bedroom at home was getting messy.

When the painter moved out and she was faced with paying an extra \$160 a month, Morhauser knew she had to do something. Her \$5.40-an-hour sales position at Walter White Fine Arts in Capitola wasn't enough to support her artwork.

At the urging of her husband, she designed a line of handmade glass dinnerware that was also dishwasher safe, and started to market it.

And that was the start of a booming business for Annieglass Studio.

With the business direction of her husband and partner, Michael Reinhold, Morhauser launched a new line of glass dinnerware that has received international acclaim. Still handmade at the Old Sash Mill — in a larger facility — the glassware is sold in many of the finest stores across the country including Nordstrom, Macy's and I. Magnin.

Sales took off in 1985, when Morhauser introduced Roman Antique Gold and Platinum dinnerware. The dinnerware was inspired by ancient glass artifacts and intentional-

ly made to look antique. The pieces are individually hand-cut, ground, then kiln-fired to give lifetime permanence to the gold and platinum bands.

Sales tripled for the next three years. This past year sales have doubled, and Annieglass now turns out 35,000 pieces of glassware a year.

The original 400-square-foot studio in the Old Sash Mill has expanded to 3,000 square feet with 14 full-time employees including managers Jeffrey Andrews and Dawn Spurloch.

Coming out of the California Col-



Success beyond imagining: Ann Morhauser

lege of Arts and Crafts in Oakland in 1979, where she studied under world-renowned glassmaker Marvin Lopofsky, Morhauser was making four-piece dinnerware settings that wholesaled for \$345 a setting — almost purely a fine art piece and not a financial success.

She worked for four years in sales before marketing her artware full-time.

"My husband totally supported me in the beginning," she said. "I lost all my credit cards trying to sell my stuff at wholesale shows around the country ... They just gave me back my credit cards!"

While Reinhold manages the business end of Annieglass, Morhauser continues experimenting with slumped, bent and decorative glass techniques. She is currently trying sandblasting dinner-

ware and glass end tables.

From their showroom studio at 303 Potrero St., No. 8, they sell "seconds," where the Roman Antique dinnerware, regularly \$120 per four-piece setting, goes for half price.

"I never imagined all of this," said Morhauser. The success enables them to show the glassware at shows across the country. And while the glassware has drawn considerable success on the East Coast, it allows them to still live where they want to — in Santa Cruz. •

— Tracie White