

Roger Cox: Illustrating Summit Co. since 1989

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House of Signs in Frisco marks 20th anniversary

By **ROBERT ALLEN**
SUMMIT DAILY NEWS

FRISCO — The art of Roger Cox is visible from streets all over Summit County.

His custom, handcrafted signs exhibit messages unique to the businesses they represent — like that of Ten Mile Creek Kayaks in Frisco.

"It really makes an impression," Cox, 40, said of the craft he calls a "dying art."

House of Signs this year marks its 20th anniversary, and as much as 50 percent of the signs in Frisco and Breckenridge originated in his shop.

"I really do take a lot of pride in changing the faces of local businesses," he said.

With technology making it much easier for sign creation, he said there are fewer people making signs by hand and that training programs have become sparse.

Though many of Cox's signs appear wooden, they're made from a high-density urethane that is "completely impervious to weather," he said.

They range from \$200 to \$80,000 and can take as long as three months to design. He said he typically completes about 200 projects per year.

"I'm always so busy," Cox said.

He keeps the work in-house and has the help of fabricator and installer Mark Bocksch and metal-worker Steve Huyler. His wife, Julie, helps with the shop part-time.

Though Cox has done a few projects for businesses elsewhere — like a water-skiing ranch in Oklahoma — the vast majority of his clients are local and regional.

He's designed the signs for several independent businesses as well as all the Alpine Banks on the Western Slope.

His latest big project is a pair of signs on either end of the highway entering Alma. The roughly 16-foot-tall signs that include metal, crushed glass and images of a shovel and pick-ax began as sketches with pencil and paper.

Cox said many of his projects develop an image or logo for the entities they represent.

The Frisco Bay Marina sign is one of his favorites.

"That sign down there is such a landmark," Cox said, adding that his business's roots began in Frisco.

Cox graduated from the Rocky Mountain College of Art and Design in Denver in 1988 before working at a shop in Australia.

The Boulder native returned to Colorado and spent a season waiting tables in Keystone before his business began to take shape.

"It was just amazing to me the need for signs," he said.

He set up a makeshift shop in his bedroom in Summit Cove. Soon he moved to the second floor of a structure in the Frisco Historic Park, where his shop eventually took over the entire building.

Three years ago, Cox moved the shop across the street at 211 Main Street in Frisco — a dream several years in the making.

Some of his more noticeable signs include the Backcountry Brewery in Frisco, the Grand Lodge in Breckenridge and the Dillon Dam Brewery (as well as the interpretive brewery tour) in Dillon.

Cox said he's working with the folks at Dillon Dam toward a possible landmark sign, for the existing sign is actually painted on a silo.

Biking, music and family

When he's not designing or consulting, Cox enjoys cycling and running.

"I'm a dedicated outdoorsman," he said.

He ran in the Summit Trail Running series and Summit Mountain Challenge mountain



Summit Daily/Mark Fox

Roger Cox works on new signage for the Town of Alma in his studio on Main Street in Frisco located next to Loaf and Jug.

bike racing series this year, and has plans for more races this fall.

"I've always been competitive. To me it's the best release I have found for running a hectic business," Cox said.

He also enjoys spending time with his 4-year-old twin daughters.

"Being a parent is the most amazing challenge I've ever had," he said.

Near the design table in his shop is an acoustic guitar. Cox said he's been getting back into music lately and would "love to get to the point of entertaining as a hobby."

He plays bluegrass and music with the Jack Johnson sound.

"I'm actually creating my own original songs for my daughters when they go to sleep at night," Cox said.

Long-term, he hopes one of the daughters will perhaps take an interest in his art and take over the House of Signs.



Summit Daily/Mark Fox

Roger Cox, owner of House of Signs, designs and creates artwork which he incorporates into his sign work.

"I'm not going to push it, but the opportunity is there," he said.

Meanwhile he's cultivated a solid reputation in Summit County — with 95 percent of his work coming from referrals.

"It's a really rewarding road I'm going down right now," Cox said.

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