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Silverhorn's new Design Studio opens on Coast Village Road

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December 31, 2018 12:42 PM

Walk into Silverhorn's stylish new Design Studio on Coast Village Road and you quickly get a sense of what makes this icon of Montecito so admired. Along with samples of uncut precious stones in the jewelry cases, the craftsmen who sculpt the store's creations are now also proudly on display.

"A big part of the inspiration behind this new Design Studio was to have our designers be more in the public eye," explained Carole Ridding, who owns and operates Silverhorn with her husband, Michael. "At the old location, they were out in the back. But here, their workspace is in the middle of the studio where our customers can see them at work."

While display cases showcasing Silverhorn's latest pieces line the walls of the new 1,100-square-foot location, situated in the center of the studio is Silverhorn's heart and soul, it's design center. Within the glassed-in workspace, you can see the company's designers, Noel Bendle and Darby Farmer, meticulously plying their craft.

"I always felt that it was a shame that such talented people were hidden away out of the public's view like they were at the old location," Mrs. Ridding said. "They play such an important role in creating the jewelry, so we thought it was important for them to have more contact with the customers. This new layout will help make a more personal connection between the designers and customers."

Silverhorn has seen some significant changes during the recent past. The Riddings decided to close their original Coast Village Road location a couple blocks away at the end of 2017 and concentrate Silverhorn's focus on the boutique at Four Seasons Resort The Biltmore Santa Barbara

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Silverhorn's customers can now see the brand's designers at work in the new space.



Noel Bendle, left, has been a designer and goldsmith with Silverhorn for 21 years.



Jeweler Darby Farmer has been setting stones there for a decade.

while contemplating what form a new Coast Village Road venture would take.

"Retail is going through trying times at the moment," Mrs. Ridding said. "It has changed so much that it was important for us to do something fresh and new and exciting, and I think that's what we have achieved here."

The recently launched Design Studio is a concept its designers have embraced. As Mrs. Ridding opens a display case to show a customer one of Silverhorn's necklaces, the two designers can be seen through the glass behind her, working away on a brand-new designer piece.



As well as displays of its immaculately crafted jewelry, Silverhorn's new studio showcases the raw precious stones from which they're cut.

"Because we were tucked away upstairs at the old location, a lot of customers didn't know there were designers in-house," said Mr. Bendle, who has been a designer and goldsmith with Silverhorn for 21 years. "What makes Silverhorn special is that we make one-of-a-kind pieces, so it is great that the customers can now see us doing the work that makes Silverhorn so unique."

According to Mr. Bendle, the foundations for what makes Silverhorn so unique lay with Mr. Ridding and his remarkable knack for finding unique precious stones.

"Michael has an incredible ability to source the most amazing gems and stones," Mr. Bendle said. "I have worked with some really incredible stones that you won't see anywhere else in the world. Being able to turn that into a one-off piece of jewelry is a very amazing experience."

Those one-of-a-kind gemstones are also being featured in the new store's layout. Below the studio's central showcase is a row of self-closing drawers filled with precious stones and items fashioned from them. Customers can browse the collection at their leisure and perhaps unearth a treasure of their own.

Unearthing treasures is what Silverhorn has been doing in Montecito for about 35 years. The name comes from the majestic Silverhorn Mountain in the Canadian Rockies just behind Banff, where they started the business in 1976. Having opened the first Montecito store in a smaller space at 1155 Coast Village Road in 1983, Silverhorn then expanded into larger premises at the same location in 1999.

"When we had our original store in Banff, Canada ... over the years, we met many people from California, who responded well to colored stones and particularly liked our designs," Mrs. Ridding said. "Banff was too small of a place to sustain a business like ours forever, so we started looking elsewhere."

"We didn't think about the border; we just wanted to find a place where we could succeed, and Santa Barbara was a place that stood out to us. It is a place where culture is important and receives creative people well. I think it was good that we didn't do a lot of what people now call market research because we just jumped into this and it's probably the best decision we've ever made."

Having started laying plans for the Silverhorn Design Studio around the time the company was wrapping up business at the old Coast Village Road location, the Riddings and their team couldn't be happier with the results.

"The reason we moved away from the large store we were in before and had the sale was so we could have a fresh start," Mrs. Ridding said. "It's important to keep things fresh, exciting and interesting, for everyone."

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FYI

Silverhorn Design Studio, 1235 Coast Village Road, is open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday. For more information, call 969-0442 or visit www.silverhorn.com.