

## In the Monet

### **In Your Space proves artists can make money**

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For the past several years, Danny Phillips and Mary Senders have made a business of being in your space. And with a little help from the Parade of Homes, the city of Georgetown and customers who span the continent, they've managed to get their business down to a fine art.

Phillips and Senders operate In Your Space Inc., an artists' Collaborative based in Cedar Park that specializes in creating custom wall finishes for commercial and residential spaces. The business was incorporated in 2003, and that year sales reached \$223,000, a revenue figure that many struggling artists would consider a virtual lottery win. But Phillips and Senders knew that with the right systems in place, In Your Space had much more potential.



"As an artist, I can pretty much recreate anything if I study and research it enough," says Phillips, a longtime painter who previously worked as a graphic designer. "But I had no idea about the business side. Artists just want to give their art away. Luckily, Mary had a better idea."

Senders, a former headhunter, helped turn Phillips' creative ideas into reality, in part, by setting up some systems and infrastructure that would allow the business to prosper. Since its inception, In Your Space has grown into a sustainable company that has 11 employees (all of whom are eligible for full benefits). The company raked in about \$658,000 in sales in 2006.

"We basically tripled our revenue over the last three years," Senders says. "And in 2007, we expect to hit over \$1 million in sales."

For Phillips and Senders -- who began building the company with occasional faux-finishing jobs at various Texas restaurants -- developing relationships with architects and builders was key to their success. Within six months of launching, In Your Space landed a large residential project with the Parade of Homes in Austin, and the team has been asked to participate in the parade almost every year since, often by the homebuilders themselves.

But the company's clients reach far beyond high-end home tours. In Your Space has been commissioned to beautify upscale residential and commercial projects across the state, as well as in Florida, Colorado, Arizona and even Canada. One project In Your Space artists are currently working on is a multidimensional mural commissioned by the city of Georgetown that will liven up the city's town square.

"We've been so successful so quickly, and a lot of that comes from repeat business," Senders says.

As an artist, Phillips can bring to life just about any kind of design, and he often does. In fact, the In Your Space faux brick design -- one of the company's most popular -- is so realistic that it's difficult to distinguish the art from the real thing. The company recently completed a job in Austin that involved painting an entire room to give the illusion of an underground wine cellar. Further proving that almost everything can be recreated, the company has also tackled a recreation of "The Last Supper" -- arguably one of the best-known pieces of art in the world.

"The world always needs more art and more people talking about art," Phillips says. "If we can help educate more people about art, that's really rewarding."

For Phillips, one of his biggest challenges in operating his own arts-based company has come in establishing business systems. But with the help of training manuals and organizational tools, Phillips and his artists have become accustomed to thinking of art as business.

Having already cleared many hurdles, In Your Space is looking to the future. In 2006, the company acquired about 1,600 square feet of office and studio space, and for 2007, expansion is the goal. The company is going as far as toying with the idea of expanding into other Texas cities.

"What we'd like to do eventually is open a gallery and some sort of retail space," Phillips says.

Another expansion goal includes setting up shop in cities outside of Austin -- perhaps in Fort Worth, Houston or San Antonio -- which means bringing on more artists.

"I want to see our art everywhere," Phillips says.

For Senders, an expansion translates to more work and more challenges. But she's up for it.

"The nature of operating and owning your own business is always a challenge, but I view everything as an opportunity," she says. "Every year, about nine out of 10 goals we set include something we haven't done before. And that's how we get better and continue to grow. I wouldn't be happy if we were faced with no challenges."

In Your Space Inc.

**What it does:** Artists' collaborative that creates custom wall finishes for commercial and residential spaces

**Revenue:** Expected to hit \$1 million in 2007

**Employees:** 11

**Phone:** (512) 257-7109

**Web:** [www.inyourspaceart.com](http://www.inyourspaceart.com)