



Ladysmith potter Mary Fox plans to leave future artists a legacy: her Third Ave. studio for two year residencies

CRAIG SPENCE

Potter Mary Fox living her legacy now

Craig Spence

THE CHRONICLE

As a potter, Mary Fox doesn't have to calculate a vanishing point in her works; as an inspired human being, she has a vanishing point clearly in mind, and wants to build a legacy beyond the here-and-now.

Fox plans to bequeath her studio at 321 Third Avenue in Ladysmith to be used as a place where young potters will be able to get a start.

"When I pass, there will be a residency here – an artists' residency," she said. "The idea is that an artist under the age of 30 can apply to become a resident artist at Mary Fox Studio for two years."

She is working with the Potters' Guild of British Columbia and Vancouver Island University to get what has turned out to be a major project set up.

A board of directors has to be in place; documentation about how the residency program and legacy will work; and an accumulation of assets that will sustain the project in perpetuity.

"Everything is in the formation stage right now," Fox said. But her vision is clear: "A place for young artists to start honing their craft.

"Whatever I accumulate in my lifetime will go to support the legacy project."

Fox is taking steps to leverage her al-

ready global stature to ensure the project will benefit artists and her community for a long time to come.

Central to that objective is Mary Fox Studio's status as a 'destination point,' both on the Island and internationally. Keeping it that way will help ensure her legacy project is supported and funded.

To build on its reputation Fox has applied for and been granted status as one of Vancouver Island's Economusée sites.

Economusée, a concept launched in Quebec and France, puts 'local artisan sites' on maps that are increasingly used by international arts and cultural enthusiasts to explore what regions have to offer.

An Economusée brochure for Vancouver Island includes Merridale Cider, in Cobble Hill; Tugwell Creek Farm & Meadery, in Sooke; and Hazelwood Herb Farm, right here in Ladysmith.

Now Mary Fox Studio will be part of the Island tour; and that's part of Mary Fox's legacy, too. Economusée describes its participants' venues as 'living museums.'

"Each destination is unique – yet all recognize the importance of conserving the heritage of traditional skills, producing authentic handcrafted products and contributing innovative ideas to their trade."

Participants in the program include information about their art or craft on their premises. Fox will set aside space for a video and other information about her studio and about pottery as an art form.

"Becoming part of Economusée becomes a natural link," Fox said.

At 55 she is also working with author Leah Fowler on an autobiographical coffee table book to be titled: *Unearthing Beauty – the Life and Work of Mary Fox*.

The legacy project has prompted Fox to publish the book earlier than planned, and to add a chapter that will talk about the residency, and encourage readers to support it.

A potter since the age of 13, Fox is self-taught. She has never made her living any other way. Despite her success, she says she would have benefited tremendously from the type of residency she is setting up.

"I would have given my eye-teeth to take a residency in a place like I'm planning," she said.

Asked if she's living her legacy now, Fox lit up. "I am! Lucky me, and it's not just for two years.

"If I had been told when I was 20 years-old that this is what I'd be doing and where, I wouldn't have believed it. I didn't know I had it in me."

That's a feeling she hopes her future beneficiaries will get to experience too.