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LOOKING FORWARD

It's the end of an era for iconic Margaret River gallery; Page 8



L-R: David and Joanne Paris (and Hugo), with Lara and Gary Bennett at JanHoc Galleries on Bussell Highway. Picture: Nicky Lefebvre

NEWS

To the next adventure

Beloved gallery to close in June 2023

BY NICKY LEFEBVRE

A MAINSTAY of the Margaret River Main Street will take on a new life next year, with the owners of JahRoc's collections announcing the closure of the retail arm of the business in 2023.

Established 20 years ago by friends and furniture designer-maker duo Gary Bennett and David Paris, the gallery has grown to become a lovingly curated space filled with some of the finest art, jewellery and of course, furniture, in the country.

The business quickly grew in popularity and presence, attracting a strong client base around the world, and establishing a varied collection of works from South West artists in high demand.

"Our business pretty much doubled overnight," Gary Bennett told the *Mail* this week, reminiscing about the first days of the gallery. "We were surpassing the numbers from our York gallery within a few months of being here, it was unbelievable."

"All of a sudden the workshop in York was having to deal with production going through the roof... growing pains!"

"That sounds like a good thing but trying to manage cash flow and quality and orders, it was a challenge."

After around five years of operating both galleries, David and Joanne Paris looked to move south, and a decision was made to close the York gallery. A new workshop was constructed in Kilcarnup, and the JahRoc roots began to take hold in the community.

With business at its peak

and interstate customers making trips for the sole purpose of procuring pieces from JahRoc's collections, the decision to close the retail operations came as a shock to some.

"The time is right," said Bennett. "Dave and Jo wanting to take a step back was a catalyst, and we got a really good offer for the building and we decided to take it. We've had an absolutely great run, the last two years have been incredible, we'll definitely miss the connection with the artists, and the customers."

Lara Bennett, who manages the gallery alongside Joanne Paris, said while the space would remain in creative hands moving forward, things would be different.

"Our mix of artists plus the furniture will never be in here again. We definitely believe we are at the absolute peak of our collective, so it's a strange feeling to know that we're closing at this top point in our career."

Joanne Paris said artists with works displayed at JahRoc were surprised at the decision. "They understand, definitely, but they're very sad to see such a wonderful institution as we've become, close the doors."

The months leading to the last day on June 30 will be busy, with several artists set to exhibit and the Argyle pink diamonds showcased in the gallery. Dedicated customers are rushing to get in one last shopping trip.

"It's totally amazing," said Joanne. "One of them has booked a holiday over here from Sydney, just to come over and see us."



Mates, business partners and furniture design-maker duo David Paris and Gary Bennett at JahRoc Galleries in Margaret River. Picture: Nicky Lefebvre



The gallery has been a mainstay of the Margaret River Main Street for 20 years. Picture: Supplied



JahRoc houses a collection of fine art, furniture and jewellery by renowned local artists. Picture: Supplied

Dave Paris said he was looking forward to having the time and space to "just enjoy life".

"Producing this kind of furniture day in, day out is bloody hard work, it has to be perfect. When I get to the 30th of June, I'm not doing another job card ever again, but we'll still have a couple of years of work to produce before I hang up the boots."

When it comes to the future, the sky's the limit.

"We weren't really keen to

sell the gallery as a business on its own, mostly because the real heart and soul of JahRoc has always been our furniture business," explained Gary Bennett. "We have discussed that the possibility of a young (or not so young) designer picking up our brand and running with it... that would be pretty cool. Having spent 35 years building a strong brand with a base of some 8,000 dedicated followers, and reaping the rewards of that, we felt it

would be a shame to let the brand fizzle out."

Bennett said there was potential for someone with a passion for design and the arts to take up the opportunity.

"Our property on Caves Rd is an ideal location and has an excellent manufacturing facility all set up with a solid stock of raw materials. As I intend to continue in Margs from my home studio for many years to come, I would be around to help with some

design and business advice, et cetera. I always like the idea of artists of different genres such as painters, glass blowing, sculpture and jewellery working in close proximity and the shared creativity that would create."

For now though it is full steam ahead, with only 34 weeks left and many celebratory exhibitions and events on the calendar. Pop in and soak it up before the doors close on this iconic chapter of the JahRoc journey.