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Once-urban Cynthia Sweetland, husband Kevin Smith, say nature helps creativity flow

Couple use work space in woods for design, business needs

By Warren Gerds

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Time was, Cynthia Sweetland couldn't say this:

"One of the things I really like about my work space is that it's in the woods, and I can just kind of peer out the windows and see what the environment is bringing. It kind of rests the mind and lets the creative juices flow. That's one of my favorite things."

Sweetland and her husband, Kevin J. Smith, lived in New York City and Boston for about 20 years combined before returning to Wisconsin.

"Cyndee works movie sets, murals and many other artistic endeavors, and Kevin does cement art, i.e., countertops, walkways, etc.," says Maribeth Conard, who suggested the couple for this series.

Sweetland and Smith have work spaces for design and business needs inside their home in rural Brown County.

Their giant studio is a few steps away in another building. It's where their projects physically take shape.

"Sometimes I'm in here a couple of hours a day, sometimes I'm in here 15 hours a day," Sweetland says.

Her work space is often the job site.

"That's where you find me for the better part of the process," she says.

It's the same with Smith. On the day of the visit for this feature, he is about to take a hefty load of cement countertops to its destination.

The work space is equipped "with all your weapons, as it were, for making stuff," Smith says. "I like making stuff."

All around are multitudes of saws, clamps, grinders, routers, brushes, paints, tables and sanders. Just outside is Smith's favorite piece of equipment, a mixer for jobs that need a half-yard of concrete or "yards and yards and yards."

Smith's CemArt Inc. is a division of Surroundings by Sweetland. The couple creates numerous items, and Sweetland shares the interest in art and theater of her father, the late Bob Sweetland.

Back East, Sweetland and Smith were associated with professional theater and much more in a multitude of ventures.

In their present work space, they sometimes team on a project but more likely they have projects of their own. An expert's eye is always nearby for advice.

"You just need to pull on the other half's sleeve," Sweetland says.

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