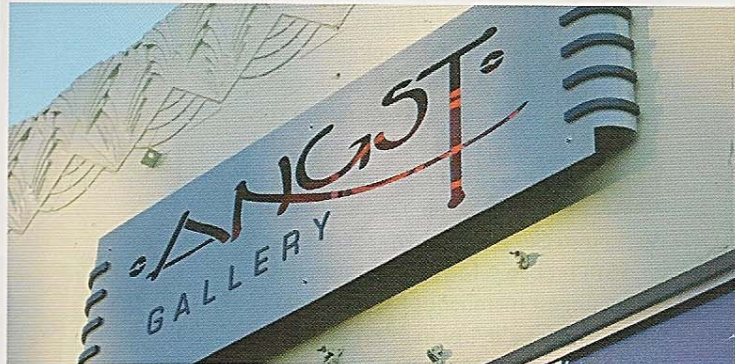
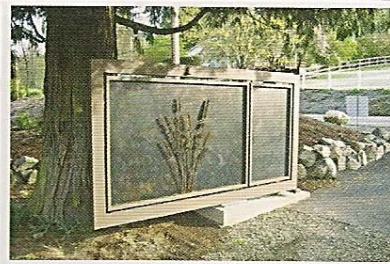


Dave Frei and Jennifer Corio both worked at HP's Vancouver campus. During a sabbatical, marketing specialist Corio discovered and pursued metal work. Frei, a mechanical engineer, was offered early retirement. Together, they parted with HP and so began Cobalt Designworks.

Jennifer Corio is affiliated with Vancouver-based Women Who Weld, which has a sculpture installed on the banks of the Columbia River commemorating the women who worked in the World War II Kaiser Shipyards.

The couple lives and works light on the earth. Visit [www.cobalt-designworks.com/blog/treading-lightly](http://www.cobalt-designworks.com/blog/treading-lightly) for a list of green decisions.



Photos courtesy of Cobalt Designworks

## Atomic energy

*Vancouver metal art and architectural design company explodes*

STORY BY JESSICA SWANSON

Dave Frei and Jennifer Corio have a great space with good energy to build their creations in. They should – their artistic hands have touched it all, from garden design by Corio to a giant metal gate leading into their studio by Frei. Owners of Cobalt Designworks, Frei and Corio are the local celebrities of decorative and artistic metal work. Their work can be seen in commercial and public spaces of all kinds, from the signs over Angst and Niche on gallery row in downtown Vancouver to the Arnada Neighborhood sign to the gate at a far-flung farm, Woodinville Lavender.

In addition, the pair pushes their boundaries in the public arena, by applying for public art installations. They recently installed a piece in Bremerton, have one in Puyallup and one in Moses Lake. In October, they traveled to install a 15-foot “tree” at the Port of San Diego and to make an installation in Palm Desert, the Shapely Two. Corio designs these pieces and markets them, while Dave builds them in their custom shop behind their Uptown home.

The backbone of their work is in architectural pieces for the home and garden in all styles from Art Deco to Craftsman to Southwest. They have private structures installed as far west as Astoria, and their portfolio is brimming with gates and railings. They would like to move further into lighting, and recently Jennifer designed a simple

structure to hang Moroccan lamps in Uptown bistro Mint Tea. It was a way to promote an item she thought was beautiful while showcasing their own work. Three of the lamps hang in their own home from such a structure.

**COBALT DESIGNWORKS**  
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In this market, each client has unique tastes and needs. One Portland railing incorporates the homeowner's handmade glass tiles, while another exhibited images of the property's frogs, which gave the owner, an 80-year-old woman who was making her home more accessible, a simple enjoyment.

Corio says Cobalt tries to find clients who have the “same vision” they do, and often, the owners simply need to be listened to, and have their interests and stories teased out of them, as in the case of the Corio-dubbed “Ribbit Railing.” Sometimes the stories are more prominent, as in the renovated historic Portland home which today bears a Cobalt-designed sign invoking its heritage.

Even in a down economy, Cobalt Designworks is flourishing, and they have begun speaking with potential apprentices. Within six months to a year, the couple will expand their operation into a shop on East McLoughlin Boulevard. **NB**