



The late actor's studio in his Bristol home

# THE BUSINESS OF CREATIVITY

## The Anthony Quinn Foundation works hard to foster young talent

By Stephanie Wheeler • Photography by Judith Gardner

**Walking into Kathy Quinn's** Bristol home is like walking into a warm memory. Quinn, widow of deceased actor and artist, Anthony Quinn, has maintained a home (and surrounding grounds) filled with his assorted works of art - and he was a surprisingly prolific artist, across a large array of mediums. In one corner one might find an oil and chalk painting, and in another, a two-story sculpture created from a chunk of wood Quinn found while walking on a beach during his travels as an actor. The art is approachable - in fact, it is meant to be approached, as Quinn wouldn't have had it any other way.

Kathy explains, while standing over a series of his wooden sculptures, "He wanted people to be involved in the art, to immerse themselves in it. He wanted them to touch his work, to get their hands on it, to get the feel of it. If he had pieces showing in a gallery and there were signs up stating 'Please Do Not Touch the Art,' he would rip them down."

In the spirit of his memory, Kathy Quinn developed the Anthony Quinn Foundation. According to the foundation's website ([www.anthonyquinnfoundation.org](http://www.anthonyquinnfoundation.org)), the foundation's mission is to "actively advance the belief that art, in all of its forms, is inseparable and essential to learning and the enrichment of the mind." It serves to "promote, pay tribute and sustain Anthony Quinn's legacy and to serve as a public resource - inspiring all to challenge individual and collective artistic spirit and the encouragement and means to build confidence in creative potential."

The foundation raises and distributes funds as scholarships to nominated high-school students to help them attend arts education programs throughout the world. Kathy Quinn explains that the foundation, which she started in 2007, was her own idea. "It wasn't something my husband started," she says. "People think that, but it's not the case. He didn't leave all of this stuff, like the Rockefeller trust, though that's the assumption." It wasn't until people wondered why she

spent so much time fundraising that she learned there was a disconnect: "I didn't realize that until people were like, 'Why are you fundraising? Don't you have an endowment? No, I don't.'" Clearly the foundation is a labor of love.

Quinn elaborates, "It's really modeled after my husband, both his work and his life. He was born in Mexico. He grew up in East Los Angeles in a very poor neighborhood. He always had an interest in creating."

Anthony Quinn's life was changed entirely, both financially and from a personal perspective when he invested himself in his art. A contest that he won allowed the then-teenager to meet famed architect Frank Lloyd Wright. "When he met him, Wright identified a speech impediment and said, 'You know you can't be an architect speaking like that.' He'd gone through his whole youth. He sent him to a doctor and he was tongue tied, and so had an operation and speech therapy," she explains.

"He couldn't afford the therapy and so he bartered with an acting school, and said, 'I'll janitor with you if you give me speech lessons every afternoon'. It was a school for high-school students, and they were putting on a play, and one of the kids dropped out, so he got the role." Thus began Quinn's acting career.

"Of course, the theory behind the foundation, then, is that creativity helps - with your development, your self-confidence, as it did with him. His painting informed his acting career, his acting informed his painting career, and they all made up parts of him and sent him on a different life path," she says.

This is what the Foundation hopes to do for high-school students nominated into its scholarship program as well. "We try to create that different life path for high school students," Quinn explains. "They have to be nominated by a teacher, or an adult, or a professional. It's nationwide, and can be any kid. It's their passion that we identify. The kids have to choose the program they want to attend, and they need to be support-



The memorial to Anthony Quinn



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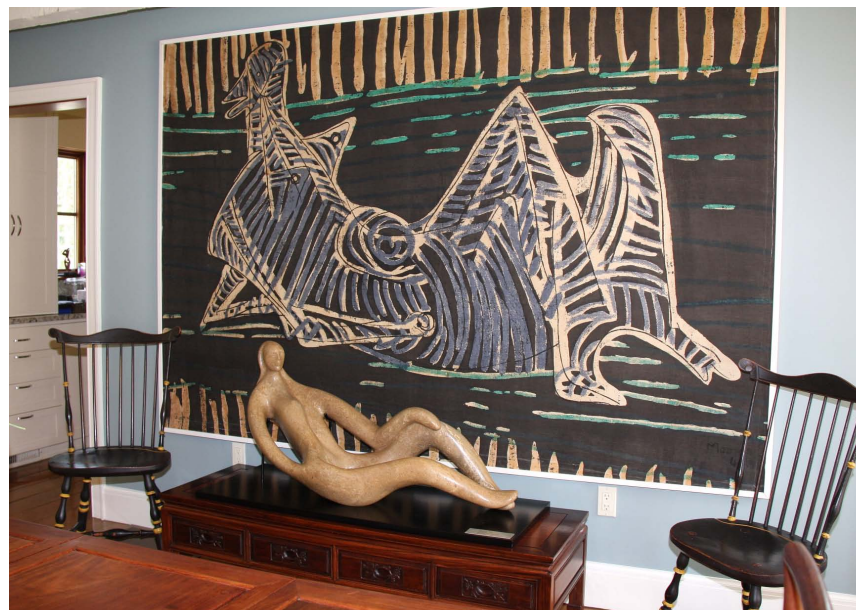
ed and recommended by an adult. We didn't want a bunch of applications from kids alone, we wanted an adult to buy into the kid, too."

By combining adult support with student desire, the application process comes together. "We wanted the integrity of the Foundation to be strong, so we have a scholarship committee and a panel of judges. I am removed from that, of course, so that people wouldn't be compelled to personally involve me in any capacity, especially in Rhode Island, where people might ask how their child's application is going. So, I just send it on to the committee."

the funding. We sent a kid to the London Theater, one to a dance program, Nutmeg Conservatory in CT. It's a wide range," says Quinn.

"Four of the kids are going to be here on Saturday for a fundraiser and they are going to be talking to the guests about their experience. It gives people a back-and-forth. It's good for everybody," she explains.

The program works to establish a relationship between young artists and sponsor/donor. "This year we developed a way for people to donate to sponsor a kid, and the person's name is on the kid's certificate, and then we



The judges come from an extensive list of professional artists and performers, including musicians, artists, singers, graphic designers - even someone from the Berklee College of Music in Boston. Much of the student work is reviewed digitally, so that judges from across the country can weigh in on the submissions.

The program also requires some initiative and work on the student's part as far as fundraising is concerned. Quinn comments, "We give only a partial scholarship. They have to make up the rest. So, say they want to go to RISD summer camp, they would need to spend \$7,000, but we only give \$1,000-3,000. They need to come up with the rest of the money, maybe through a grandparent, or working with the program they are applying to enter. We had one girl apply to RISD this year, and the remainder of the scholarship was funded by the program itself through financial aid."

There are a limited number of scholarships available, though that may change depending on future funding. "This year we only have six, because it depends on

will develop a way for the kid to inform their donor about their experience. That's really the crux of what we do," Quinn says, emphasizing the interactive nature of the program.

Quinn would like to see young students nurtured in their creativity in hopes that this creativity will inform their lives on a holistic level. Anthony Quinn's 'self-realization through art' is something she would like to inspire in these students. This explains why she maintains so much of his art in the workshops and studios on her grounds.

"Allowing people access to his stuff and what he was working on, it interests them in the arts, and the foundation. I take people to his workshop where he carved his wood, the pieces of stone that were about to be something. They see how the creativity is really a process, and being an artist is ingrained. It can give people hope, it can heal people."

*To learn more about the foundation, as well as Anthony Quinn's art, visit [www.anthonyquinnfoundation.org](http://www.anthonyquinnfoundation.org).* **B**