

# Times

PALM BEACH COUNTY LIFESTYLE & ENTERTAINMENT NEWS

## Local artists show their mettle

By IRIS FAHRER  
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Barbara Riley's Impressionist-inspired landscapes offer an extra bonus.

She attaches a few twigs or leaves to her paintings for a collage effect. She, along with her dear friend and fellow artist Virginia Erdie, is showing their paintings at Patch Reef Park's James A. Rutherford Community Center as part of Boca Raton's Art in Public Places program.

Riley, who lives in Boynton Beach, is an acclaimed artist who specializes in painting murals on anything and everything, from walls and ceilings to window shades and clothes, with the occasional mailbox thrown in. Looking at her paintings is like taking a walk in the countryside - you can almost smell the fragrance of her brightly hued flowers, and feel the spring breeze in your hair. She says that people nowadays are so rushed and stressed out, they don't take the time to really look at their surroundings and take a deep breath.

"I hope my art gives them that chance to relax," she said. "I love to make people feel comfortable."

She has taken this concept a step further with her new program, called "Murals and You ... an Educational Approach to Décor" that allows parents and children to get involved in doing a mural together. It's an educationally based program, and has lots of activities for the children to do while the mural is going up. It allows the children to take an active part in decorating their room, use their imagination and learn to paint.

"I like to make the murals tactile also, with different textures.

I use Velcro stapled to the wall so the child can move parts of the mural around, or paint it on spongy tile and make it like a huge puzzle on the wall," she said.

Riley and Erdie met two years ago and soon became friends to last a lifetime.

"We just clicked," Riley said. "It's like she's been a girlfriend of mine forever, and we've only known each other for two years."

They met at the Hollywood International Art Festival when their booths were next to each other.

Erdie, who lives in Hollywood, is a classically trained artist who attended the Central School of Art and Design in London, and traveled all over Europe to study the great works of masters in museums and galleries in Amsterdam, Paris and Edinburgh. She also has a master's degree in art therapy. While Riley's work tends to the pastoral, Erdie's is abstract bordering on the surreal.

Her inspiration tends to come from within.

"I wrote science fiction stories when I was young," she says. "I studied philosophy. I'm very interested in the Matrix."

Themes of creation and the evolution of the universe including time, space and energy are evident in her paintings.

"What I'm trying to do [with my art] is to invoke feelings from people," she says.

They should interpret the art in terms of what it means to

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**NATURAL ART:** Artist Barbara Riley's diptych, or two painting set, "Water Fall" incorporates real leaves for a 3-D effect. Photo/Iris Fahrer



**PEACEFUL ARRANGEMENT:** Virginia Erdie's "Playing in the Universe" is the first painting in which she used fabric and metal. Photo/Iris Fahrer



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figure out what it means to me, she says.

Erdie considers evolution more than an idea in her art, so she characterizes her work as an artist to be an evolution. She is just starting to explore adding three-dimensional objects to her paintings, such as brightly colored fabric and shiny metallic whatnots that she picks up at Home Depot.

"I want it to be fun [for people]," she says. "It's playful, and maybe it brings out the child in them."

Erdie sketches ideas wherever she is, on what ever is handy.

"I actually have lami-

nated paper napkins from 20 years ago with my original sketches on them," she says.

She says the images come to her and she can visualize the finished work.

"The sketch is a recording of my feeling."

*Barbara Riley's and Virginia Erdie's art is on display through July 31 at the James A. Rutherford Community Center at Patch Reef Park, 2000 NW 51st St., Boca Raton.*

*The community center is open 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. Monday through*

*Friday, Saturday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Sunday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. The exhibit is free. You can learn more about the educational mural program on Riley's Web site [www.muralfantasies.com](http://www.muralfantasies.com). For more information on the exhibit, call 561-997-0791.*

