

ARTS & EVENTS

Riggs' paintings depict 'readout' of her conscious

The Art Scene

BY PAT STEIN



Dorothy Riggs, a gifted La Costa artist, will display her bold metaphysical images at Offtrack Gallery in Encinitas, Aug. 1-30.

Riggs' paintings are about empowerment for women, spiritual development and sensuality.

Having grown up in a male-dominated household with five brothers and a famous father (outspoken tennis champion, Bobby Riggs), Riggs found holding her own as a woman and an individual "challenging." This explains her interest in painting goddesses as symbols of empowerment for women.

The antithesis of the starving artist, Riggs grew up in what she readily acknowledges as a privileged environment.

"I've been very blessed," says Riggs, an avid student of metaphysics and a board member of the Carlsbad Unity Church.

Riggs, 38, wasn't even a gleam in her father's eye when he became the first tennis player in history to sweep all the events at Wimbledon in 1939. Riggs allows that her father, who is now 74 and has a tennis club in Cardiff, might have gone on to set other tennis records had rumblings of World War II not interrupted the games at Wimbledon the following year.

She wishes he would be remembered as, "an authentic champion" rather than for the remarks he made nearly two decades ago regarding women and tennis.

But she is proud of her father and the wall space in her La Costa home that isn't occupied by her own large-oil paintings or watercolors by her grandmother, who was also an artist, features what amounts to a tribute to her father.

Riggs is not unwilling to talk about her famous father, with whom she says she has a "very good relationship," but she has struggled to be her own person and art is the avenue she has chosen for expressing who she is



Staff photo/Bill Carman

Dorothy Riggs displays one of her metaphysical paintings.

and what she is about.

The images she creates are somewhat reminiscent of Georgia O'Keeffe's in style and content.

Riggs, who has studied painting formally at Palomar and MiraCosta colleges and at the Lora Lee Crystal School of Fine Art in La Costa, considers her paintings as a "visual readout" of her own consciousness.

"Painting is very spiritual, because it requires surrendering to the process," she said. "You have to let go and trust in your higher self."

Her paintings are empowering, "visual affirmations of life" that come from, "a pure place" within herself.

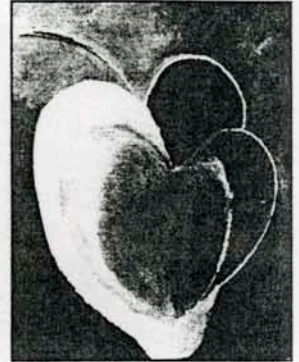
"My work has a truthful feeling — it's not slick or commercial," Riggs said.

She classifies her work as "abstract symbology" and there's more than one way to interpret most of her paintings. Forbidden Fruit, for example could be seen as two halves of an apple, two hearts or part of the female anatomy. For Riggs it symbolizes love, nourishment and the

game are low on her list of priorities. A single parent with a 16-year-old daughter who is also an artist, Riggs puts her art, daughter, home, school and church ahead of tennis.

Riggs also sees her work as a way of expressing her own identity and what's important to her.

She invites the public to a reception from 2-5 p.m. on Aug. 9. Regular gallery hours at Offtrack, which is at 510 N. Highway 101 (downstairs from the Pannikin in the old Encinitas train station building), are from 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Tuesday through Sunday.



Staff photo/Bill Carman

'Forbidden Fruit' is abstract symbology.

creative force that is everywhere in life.

Although Riggs started studying art seriously only seven years ago, she grew up surrounded by fine art.

"My mother was an art collector and I grew up with originals by painters like Grandma Moses and Dufy hanging in the house," Riggs recalled.

Although her father worked as a business executive rather than a tennis pro during Riggs's growing-up years, he did teach her and her brothers to play tennis. As a result, she says, "I can play a nice little game of tennis but people always expect me to be really good."

Although tennis remains an inescapable fact of her life, playing and talking about the