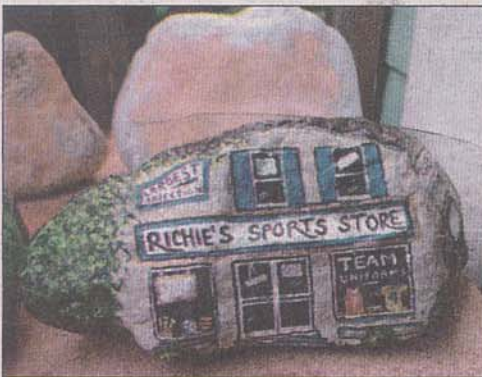


ON THE rocks

Claremont artist
paints replicas of
homes using
rocks as canvases



Myers features many styles of painted rocks.



Rock artist Dawn Grimes Myers of Claremont holds a rock with a painting of the home behind her. Terry Pi

By Suzanne Sproul
Staff Writer

Sometimes Dawn Grimes Myers has to steady a magnifying glass with one hand and a thin paint brush with the other in order to get every last detail.

In her work, details count, especially when trying to navigate along the natural crevices found in the canvases of this Claremont artist. Myers rocks, literally. Instead of the flat expanses of traditional square canvas, she opts to capture the beauty of your home on rocks.

If you're caught between that proverbial rock and a hard place this year looking for a different kind of holiday gift, you might want to consider one of Myers' pieces. You'll probably look more than once at her work. It's difficult to believe that she is able to reproduce a picture of your house on a rock she painstakingly has dug up in vacant lots in Claremont and Rancho Cucamonga, but it's true.

"When I try to explain what I do, people get confused. I say I do rock art and I think they think I do paintings on rock walls. But once they realize what I do, they just don't believe it," she said.

Architecture has always fascinated her. One of her University of California Los Angeles professors once told her she would have a great career as an architect. Her studies took her elsewhere, but she's never lost her love of buildings.

Her hobby is to construct miniature houses from kits, but she found that all her finished products were

taking up a lot of room.

"And then one day I was in the back yard getting the soil ready to put in a small herb garden, and I picked up this rock. I looked at it, and it was like a light went off. I said to myself, this rock looks like a church with all its natural lines. I started painting a scene on it and that's how Sketched in Stone (her side business) started," said Myers, who works in the administration office of the Claremont Community School of Music.

She found some ordinary rocks and started painting. She then took her work to a craft show.

"I told my husband that I would take it wherever it went. If they didn't sell, that would be OK and I'd stop," she said. "I'm overwhelmed by the response."

Myers paints a variety of generic scenes – thatched roof cottages, adobe houses, schools, even Claremont City Hall – but her specialty, and the one that seems to have grabbed the attention of many local homeowners, is rocks that mirror the image of your house.

Once commissioned to do a particular piece, she visits a house at least twice to take photographs and do sketch particular details. She also asks individuals and families questions about aspects of their homes that they love.

All the work is freehand. She doesn't use patterns or stencils.

Her pieces are displayed at front doorsteps, on backyard patios, in gardens and on fireplace mantles. Non-commissioned work sells for \$25 to \$45 each. Commissioned work can command as much as \$350.

Prices are determined by the amount of work each project takes.

"Most people are very attached to their homes. They are a great sense of pride to them, and they want my work because it's a record of their houses. I've heard from several people who have bought my rocks that they've taken them with them to a new house as a way of remembering the old one. People really do get misty-eyed over this," she said. "I love being able to help make them feel that their home is more special than they already knew. I try to make a family heirloom for my clients."

And that's why the artist takes such care with each job.

"This is a passion for me. I absolutely love this. Rocks are so interesting. Each one has different lines to it. No two are exactly alike. I try to look at the natural form and then go from there," she said.

Your work won't look like hers, at least not without a lot of practice, but go ahead anyway. Try.

The novice may see a plain rock. Myers sees all kinds of possibilities. She picked up one rather ordinary looking stone and turned it around in her hands.

If you decide to try on your own, will any old rock do? It depends on what you're doing. Myers suggested picking ones that have a flat side to them so they stand on their own. After that, wash them carefully to remove dirt or bugs. Dry them. Buy some acrylic paint in a variety of colors and go to it. Although the paint usually adheres well, she said you should spray the rocks with a clear acrylic sealer.