

Town focus **Del Mar**

Second career as an artist gives wo

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COMMUNITY NEWS WRITER

DEL MAR — After a yearlong bout with valley fever in 1992, then being hit by a cyclist while walking in 1993, Tena Cohn was left weak and depressed. She could no longer work as a physical therapist — her immune system wasn't strong enough.

So Cohn turned to art to fill her time and restore her strength.

Cohn said she always had a creative side and needed to continue working with her hands. For the 15 years prior to her illness, she had worked with children with disabilities as a physical therapist through California Children Services.

Now 51, Cohn found her second career as a painter and printer. She moved to Del Mar 2 1/2 years ago from Bakersfield after raising twin girls, Kelly and Tracy, and a third daughter, Jamie, with her husband, David. She has a local studio where she creates her pieces and shows them by appointment.

"I want the viewer to feel the energy coming out of my work. If a person goes away dismissing my piece, then I haven't done my job," Cohn said.

Cohn works with acrylics and mixed media.

"As an abstract artist, you do your best work when you are highly charged," said Cohn, who conveys her emotions in her work. "It's very healing."

Cohn, a Mexican-American, has pieces on display in the traveling exhibit "Art Without Borders." The exhibit began in Havana, Cuba, in February and moved on to Tecate, Mexico. "Art Without Borders" will show in Ensenada beginning next year.

"Art is a universal language," Cohn said.

An average work by Cohn is approximately 5 feet by 6 feet and takes two to three weeks to complete. Since coming to Del Mar, her palette has changed from browns and oranges to greens and blues. She is constantly gathering materials for her pieces,



Tena Cohn, with one of her paintings, "La Frontera," has pieces on display in the traveling exhibit "Art in February" then moved on to Tecate, Mexico. The exhibit will be in Ensenada beginning next year. Jerry...

from the beach to her neighbor's trash can.

"I found a kid's rocket. I don't know where I will use it, but one day it will be in one of my pieces," Cohn said.

She sold her first painting in 1995 for \$450. It was a final project from one of her art classes. One of Cohn's neighbors saw her putting it in her garage and insisted on buying it. Now she earns between \$400 and \$5,000

for her pieces.

Cohn earned her bachelor's degree in psychology from the University of Southern California when she was 23. Twenty years later, she went back to school. She has completed more than 30 art classes at California State University Bakersfield and Bakersfield College. She also did a summer work study program in 1999 at the Santa Fe Art Institute in New Mexico,

where she apprenticed as a printer. Locally, she took classes at the Athenaeum Arts in La Jolla and at Oceanside campus. She is a member of the North Coast Art Makers.

Cohn said her art career began when she was 5 in a poor family in downtown Los Angeles. She would visit her neighbor, an elderly woman