

# Life is a Journey to be Painted

By Matt Hickman, Sierra Vista Herald

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## Works of local artist Xo Terra hanging in EBC through Wednesday

SIERRA VISTA — For local artist Xo Terra, life is something you paint.

“I feel like I’m painting my journey as I journey through life,” Terra said, standing next to her exhibit of oil paintings at the Ethel Berger Center even as table tennis players pinged and ponged through league play Wednesday afternoon. “Whenever I took a trip, I had to paint it; a beautiful scene, I had to paint it. If I need to move in a direction, need to paint it.”

Terra had always seen herself becoming an artist as a child, and when she moved to Hawaii in 1990, the former potter and custom jewelry designer picked up a set of oil paints and a canvas and hasn’t looked back since. She won multiple contests on the big island, then, in 1994, she moved to Bisbee, a place she remembered passing through in a VW camper back in the 1970s. She spent a year in Old Bisbee, and then moved out to 40 acres of land and homesteaded for 17 years before selling the property and going on walkabout in the Australian Outback.

These journeys are the settings for most of her work, including the half dozen pieces on display through Wednesday at the EBC. These works of the transitional abstract variety, meaning they are recognizable but not realistic, include scenes painted on-site in the Coronado National Forest looking toward Mexico, another of the San Pedro River before the monsoons, another depicting the heat and vastness of the Outback, and another of a staircase ascending into a mysterious nothingness.

They all share her work’s common thread — a way in. “I like to paint something people can get into — there’s an entryway, some sort of pathway,” Terra said. “As I change, my paintings change. I paint from my experience of being human.”

Terra’s rather unique first name was given to her in the 1980s by a spiritual teacher. Terra was her first name, but she changed it legally to make it her last name. “Xo, in Greek, means spiritual life and Terra is Latin for earth, so I’m a very classical person,” she said lightly. “On a good day I’m a hug and a kiss, but on a bad day I’m an ox.”



MARK.LEVY@SVHERALD.COM Hereford artist Xo Terra stands next to her oil paintings which are displayed at the Ethel Berger Community Center.

Her painting of a staircase that existed only in her mind is somewhat of a departure from her usual abstract take on natural scenes. She’s still deciding whether to name it “Ascension” or Around the Next Corner” “I live my life with a lot of symbols,” Terra said. “What’s around the next corner? It’s going somewhere unknown with a whole lot of light coming from that space.”

Terra’s journey as a painter has included winning contests in Hawaii, doing shows in Palm Springs and hanging in galleries around Bisbee. Taking to more dual purpose and utilitarian venues like the Ethel Berger Center, and the Hereford Patient Express, where her work will be featured for an open house on March 19, and an artist invitational at the Timeless Therapeutic Day Spa in Sierra Vista on April 10, is her latest new path. “I feel like I have opened a space within me, a new space for me in my energetic level,” she said. “I’m open to more ideas of where I can sell my art, and it’s kind of fun to have two or three other venues I never would have thought of before.”

On the web: [xoterra.com](http://xoterra.com)