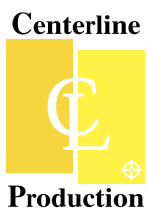


# KIA RICCHI

# PRESS



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# FLORIDA CONCRETE



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**Concrete Artists  
are Carving Out  
New Niches**

**Disney's Creative Use  
of Concrete**

**Concrete Placement**

**FC&PA'S New  
Advertising  
Campaign**

**Environmentally  
Sound Parking Lots**



# Concrete Artists Are Carving Out New Niches

*By David Wilkening*

Concrete is akin to a new modeling clay for artists to increasingly create large-scale and often abstract sculptures. For examples, look no further than Kia Ricchi, owner of the St. Cloud-based Centerline Productions Inc.

"Because it's so easy to work with and durable, more designers and architects are giving concrete a spotlight when they make plans for public places," said Ricchi.

## **Why Concrete?**

"I work in concrete because it is a structural medium that can be artistically manipulated. Concrete also has great durability and lends itself perfectly to the outdoors and heavy pedestrian use," she said.

Ricchi and a handful of other emerging artists are using concrete to create sculptures that often are

PHOTO © KIA RICCHI





becoming focal points for commercial office centers, universities, public parks and recreation sites.

Ricchi's own work owes its inspiration to Disney's Tree of Life.

"I got the real bug to do my own work when I first saw the Disney Tree of Life under construction," Ricchi said.

Ricchi grew up in Germany and other areas of Europe because her father was a Pan-Am pilot who shuttled military personal around to various bases.

After earning a bachelor's degree in New York, Ricchi spent ten years as a professional artist at Disney's Orlando theme park, Universal Studios and Sea World. She did everything from painting to sewing to carving themed facades for buildings.

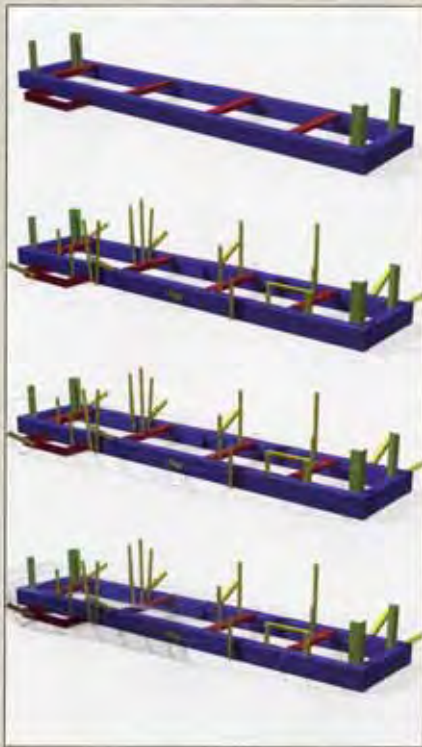


*"Florida Natives"*

After her Disney experience, she decided to go out on her own and started the Centerline Company. She began creating large, several-ton sculptures.

In the past, she has sold several pieces of her work, including the award of a \$48,000 commission from Hillsborough County to design and fabricate the entrance to the county's largest sports complex, Ed Radice Park in Tampa. The sculpture, "Building Character Through Competition," is a 14-foot-long replica of a baseball bat and ball, soccer ball and mitt. The work is atop a scoreboard-style platform illuminated with the park title.

Her work has also been displayed at the Orlando Museum of Art and the Ann



Norton Sculpture Garden in Palm Beach.

Her specialty is fabricating concrete and steel creations that mimic natural items.

Ricchi's structures are

generally created from welded steel and reinforced concrete. The engineered steel armature supports a bent rebar cage that defines the shape.

All steel is protected with a three-part marine paint system to inhibit rust. Galvanized lathe is applied to stiffen the cage. Two inches of stucco are applied and manipulated with trowels, molds and custom-made tools. Acid stains and/or integral color further add to the durability of the sculptures.

Ricchi is a licensed general contractor and makes a living doing commercial construction projects.

The sculpture work Ricchi does in her spare time is generally completed in an open studio outside her five-acre home. It may take her a month or so to complete a sculpture.

As might be expected, Ricchi's pieces, which sell for several thousand dollars and much higher, are also costly to transport.



"Full Fathom Five"

ALL PHOTOS © MIA RICCHI



"This Forest Primeval"

Her sculpture, "Full Fathom Five," is a 20-foot by 10-foot carved replica of a coral reef. Weighing in at 10,000 pounds, a crane and large trailer were needed to move it.

Ricchi is now looking at other uses of concrete such as coffee tables and other interior furnishings.

Ricchi sees the demand for commercial art as a growing market.

The new community of Harmony near St. Cloud is an example. The housing development in Central Florida commissioned her to create a piece called "Florida Natives." It was installed by a front-end loader near the entrance to the residential community.

The 10-foot-high, 10-foot-wide project has more than 20 types of indigenous animals as well as native plants.

"It's an interactive piece that reflects the philosophy of the community," Kent Foreman of Harmony Development told the Orlando Sentinel.

Ricchi does not know how many fellow concrete artists there may be in Central Florida. Perhaps a half dozen or so, but she thinks their numbers are growing as concrete catches on as an artist's medium. **FC**

## Disney's Tree of Life

Disney's wondrous 14-story Tree of Life in the Animal Kingdom is basically made of concrete placed over a modified oil rig. Its branches are made of fiberglass, while the trunk and roots are concrete.

The 145-foot tall structure has a 50-foot wide trunk. The tree spreads to 170 feet in diameter at its root base. To allow the tree to sway in the wind, a giant expansion joint encircles the tree at each branch unit.

Ten artists and three Imagineers worked full-time for 18 months to create the 325 animal carvings on the tree. Sculptors had only six to ten hours a day to create the finished images before the plaster hardened.

For the rutted safari road that is part of the landscape design, Disney's design team matched concrete with the surrounding soil, then rolled tires through it, finally tossing stones, dirt and twigs on the highway. The effect was to create an appropriately bumpy experience duplicating a remote African road.

Animal Kingdom overall has one million square feet of rockwork. What does that compare to? Disney says it's a volume that could create a monolith 10 feet by 10 feet by two miles high.



PHOTO COURTESY OF JAMES J. MILLER

# Osceola

IN HARMONY

Orlando Sentinel  
OrlandoSentinel.com

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 25, 2003



PHOTOS BY GEORGE SKENE/ORLANDO SENTINEL



**Wildlife.** Kia Ricchi (above) kneels behind a metal form of a panther, one of the indigenous animal cutouts that were being attached to a steel roller in Harmony. This 'Forest Primeval' (left) uses concrete to form a natural seating area.

## Natural world lives in artist's creations

A former theme-park worker made several pieces of interactive art for a new community.

By **DEBBIE BARR**  
SENTINEL CORRESPONDENT

**HARMONY** — Sculptor and artist Kia Ricchi is carving out her own niche for functional public art in Harmony, the new community being developed east of St. Cloud.

The Harmony developers' desire to enhance the community with accessible art reflects their eco-friendly philosophy. This has meshed well with Ricchi's interest in creating interactive art and innovative public seating inspired by natural themes.

"It has been a real nice relationship," said the St. Cloud artist, who was recently commissioned by Harmony to develop a freestanding piece of outdoor art featuring a one-ton, rusty old steel roller that had been attached to the back of a tractor used on the property before Harmony purchased it.

The piece, called "Florida Natives," was installed by a front-end loader on Monday near the entrance of the residential development on U.S. Highway 192.

Ricchi embellished the roller with silhouettes of more than 20 types of indigenous animals, as well as native plants. She positioned it upright so passers-by can spin it to view the scope of local wildlife that inhabits the area on land, in water and in the sky. The roller stands 10 feet,

PLEASE SEE **ART. H5**



# Artist has started business

**ART** FROM H1

10 inches high on its end.

Kent Foreman of Harmony Development Co. said of the work, "It's an interactive piece that reflects the philosophy of the community, and its wildlife as well."

Ricchi is no stranger to large-scale art. In fact, her specialty is fabricating creative public seating composed of concrete and steel that mimics natural items.

Harmony recently purchased one of her most stunning pieces of artistic seating, a lifelike re-creation of fallen timbers of twisted live oak set among large stones. The twisted oak is so realistic in size, shape, texture and color that it is startling to touch it and discover that it is concrete, not wood.

The work, titled "This Forest Primeval," is 14 feet long, 10 feet deep, 6 feet high and weighs about a ton. It took Ricchi a month to fabricate the concrete-and-steel structure, which last month was lowered by forklift into the community dog park.

Ricchi's inspiration for the piece came from her love of the outdoors.

"I spend a lot of time in the woods. I just find natural elements that are of interest to me," she said.

Ricchi's work in concrete has gained popularity outside of Harmony. She won a \$48,000 commission from Hillsborough County to design and fabricate the entrance to the county's largest sports complex, Ed Radice Park, in Tampa. The sculpture, titled "Building Character Through Competition," is a 14-foot-long replica of a baseball bat and ball, soccer ball and catcher's mitt atop a scoreboard-style platform illuminated with the park title.



GEORGE SKENE/ORLANDO SENTINEL

**Digging into the earth.** Artist Kia Ricchi prepares a site for her new sculpture, made out of a roller that was used on the ranchland before the new town of Harmony sprouted up east of St. Cloud.

She is also one of three finalists whose work will be chosen next month for a permanent display at the St. Lucie County Marine Center in Fort Pierce. Ricchi entered her largest public-seating piece to date in the competition — a massive 6-ton reproduction of a coral reef called "Full Fathom Five." The structure includes colorful brain, elk horn and leaf corals, starfish and a grouper peeking out from behind the coral.

"This is the stuff I do in my free time — make 6-ton pieces of sculpture," said the 41-year-old, who branched out on her own after working for 10 years as a full-time artist for Walt Disney World, Universal and SeaWorld Orlando. She did everything that required an artist's hand at the parks, from painting to sewing to fabricating plaster facades for buildings.

Ricchi became interested in

sculpting large-scale concrete structures while working at the parks. She decided to open her own business, Centerline Production Inc., to pursue that interest. She obtained a general contractor's license at the same time in order to contract general construction projects as well as public-art projects.

While the combination of art and construction may seem unusual, it is a natural fit for Ricchi, who said she has always enjoyed art and always has had a fascination with the structural integrity of things. Centerline Production "is kind of a nice mix of art and construction," she said.

For Ricchi, mixing life, art and concrete in innovative ways is all in a day's work — as is her willingness to experiment.

"You've got to have the courage to try new things," she said.

## Concrete Plays an Important Role in Public Works of Art

*Artist uses concrete to create works that imitate nature and fanciful icons*

by Ester Brody

Once just thought of as a basic medium for sidewalks, utility flooring and parking lots, concrete has become the modeling clay for a new group of artists. These artists take concrete beyond the realm of simple slabs and block used for seating in public settings. Rather, these artists envision large-scale, abstract and naturalistic sculpture that have become the focal points in many of today's commercial office centers, universities, public parks and recreation sites.

While using concrete as a backdrop to create imitation bricks and stone formations is nothing new, especially in hotel and amusement park settings, using concrete to create public art is. "Because it's so easy to work with and durable, more designers and architects are giving concrete a spotlight when they make plans for public spaces," says artist Kia Ricchi of Centerline Production in St. Cloud, Florida. "I work in concrete because it is a structural medium that can be artistically manipulated. Concrete also has great durability and lends itself



perfectly to the outdoors and heavy pedestrian use.”

### Art finds a home in diverse settings

Ricchi's work has been displayed at the Orlando Museum of Art and the Ann Norton Sculpture Garden in Palm Beach. She has also designed art for urban environments. In one recent example of urban art, Ricchi created a sculpture called “Euclidean Fancy,” an angular structure that stands about 8' tall and measures 6' deep and 6' across. The work features geometric angles and shapes that are meant to complement the surrounding architecture. To keep the piece from becoming too cold or austere, Ricchi incorporated round river rock, natural textures and acid washes to soften the overall appearance. According to Ricchi, her goal in this project and others she constructs is to build a piece that will harmonize with its surroundings while generating visual interest.

After receiving her bachelor's degree in New York, Ricchi spent ten years working as a sculptor and painter for Walt Disney World, Universal Studios

and Sea World. As one might expect, these high profile theme parks proved to be an excellent training ground for creating large scale works of art that push the envelope of creativity on a daily basis. Her work at these parks provided Ricchi with a background in using concrete to sculpt large-scale props used throughout the properties. “Working at places like Disney and Universal Studios gives an artist a fantastic opportunity to work in all types of media to create textures that truly look like the real thing,” Ricchi observes.

Ricchi was so intrigued with working in carved concrete that she started her own business, Centerline Production. Her company focuses on developing works of public art for clients like the Miami Zoo, the Florida Marlins and Blockbuster Video. Ricchi says that the whole concept of public art is a growing trend among corporations and local governments who want to support the arts by commissioning or acquiring works that provide direct access to the public. Art in public spaces has other benefits; property managers believe it boosts curb appeal and establishes a distinctive,

upscale atmosphere. Ricchi adds that public art brings people together as they observe the work, or simply use it as a landmark or photo opportunity.

Public art can also serve as a theme for a whole community. One of Ricchi's most dramatic pieces entitled “This Forest Primeval” was recently purchased by a new, upscale development whose builders are adapting to more environmentally friendly building methods to maintain wetland and wooded areas. The 14' long by 10' deep by 6' high piece represents large fallen timbers set against stone formations that look very much like a scene in a forest. “I have always admired the twisted shapes of the southern live oak trees,” Ricchi says. “The shapes seem to reflect the competition and struggle for rain and sun among the dense plant life in the deep woods.”

In some cases, entire counties have made a commitment to supporting public art. In Hillsborough County, Florida, for example, the Board of County Commissioners adopted a Public Art Ordinance, which established the county's Percent for Art





**(Above)** Is one of Ricchi's most dramatic works of art known as "The Forest Primeval." **(Right)** "Euclidean Fancy" is an example of Kia's use of concrete for abstract art creations.



Public Art Program. The program allows the board to acquire works of art for county sites and facilities. The board hired Ricchi to design and fabricate a unique structure for the entrance of the Ed Radice Park, the largest sports complex for youth sports in Hillsborough County.

### Commitment to the artistic process assures success

This project, like all the commissioned pieces Ricchi creates, was a collaborative effort between the client and artist. The process begins with a meeting to determine specific goals. For the project with Hillsborough County, Ricchi worked closely with the customer throughout the entire process to assure accuracy in artistic direction. The concept in this case was to create a large 14' sports-themed montage featuring a baseball glove, bat and ball, and soccer ball sitting on top of a scoreboard styled platform. Working from drawings based on the ideas discussed, Ricchi developed a small-

scaled model of the piece so that the client could have a preview of the finished art. According to Ricchi, providing a model is always a critical step; making changes at this stage is far easier than trying to alter direction much later in the process.

In many of her works, Ricchi employs structural engineers to create the steel armature, or frame work for the sculpture. To assure structural integrity, certified welders make critical welds at load bearing points. Rebar is attached to the primary steel and is used to create the general shape. All internal steel is treated with a 3-part marine paint system to prevent rust. The next step is the application of galvanized lathe followed by a concrete "scratch coat." Once dry, a second, thicker 1-3" coat of concrete is applied and Ricchi begins the carving process by using many hand made tools and trowels.

Ricchi ensures the longevity of her work by mixing integral color pigment into the concrete so that chips and scratches are minimized. "I like dry

pigments for their great durability, UV resistance, and solid color throughout," Ricchi says. Depending on the type of project, Ricchi also uses acid stains to create dimension and shading. "Acid stains are ideal for creating natural looking surfaces," she says. When the job calls for paint, Ricchi is careful to apply specialty coatings made for concrete that will give the work a matte finish. Ricchi notes that solid painted surfaces typically have an unrealistic shine. All of Ricchi's work from beginning concepts to finished art takes place at her studio, and depending on the scope of the job, can take several months to complete. When the work is done, flatbed trucks are used to transport the sculpture due to the large and extremely heavy scale of these projects (some as heavy as six tons). Once on location, the sculpture is maneuvered into place by a series of cranes and forklifts.

Maintenance for her sculpture is minimal due to the durability of the concrete and the coloring methods used. The exception is painted surfaces that may require retouching every three to five years due to fading.

According to Ricchi, the future looks bright for more public art projects like the ones she has created. "Public art is really taking off as more people learn to appreciate this type of artistic venue," Ricchi notes.



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Tribune photo by JAY NOLAN

Artist Kia Ricchi, center, watches the installation of her sculpture.

## Sculpture Celebrating Fun And Games Erected At Sports Complex Entrance

ODESSA — The county parks department has some new sporting goods, but it would take someone pretty big to play with them.

That's because the 14-by-14-foot baseball bat, glove, softball and soccer ball are part of a display for the entrance to Ed Radice Sports Complex, on South Mobley Drive.

Erected Tuesday, the sculpture by Kissimmee artist Kia Ricchi, was

funded with \$34,000 from the county's public art fund and \$12,380 from the Parks and Recreation Capital Projects Fund. Ricchi said it was her first public art commission.

"It's been real enjoyable working with Hillsborough County," Ricchi said. "They like to work with the artist closely to make sure the project goes smoothly."

*A staff report*

Sunday

SEPTEMBER 10, 2000

# Delray Beach News

THE LEADER IN LOCAL NEWS

## ART WALK WONDER

Artist **Kia Ricchi** guides her two-ton sculpture into place Saturday in Delray Beach's Pineapple Grove with the help of a crane. The piece was moved from the Norton Sculpture Garden in West Palm Beach. With her friend, Tom Dyar (background), Ricchi was one of the first artists to place her work on the Art Walk. It will eventually feature about 40 outdoor sculptures.

See story on Page 3A.



Sept 10, 2000

PATTI PARKER-NILSSON/STAFF

Sept 10, 2000

PATTI PARKER-NILSSON/STAFF PHOTO

## Sculpture livens up Pineapple Grove

By **Nancy Miller**  
STAFF WRITER

A huge sculpture, "Bristlecone Pine," is the newest addition to the budding artsy ambiance envisioned for the Pineapple Grove district in downtown Delray Beach.

The two-ton sculpture is also for sale - with a \$29,000 price tag - as part of Pineapple Grove's much-anticipated "Artwalk" outdoor sculpture gallery, says Renee Christiansen-Radabaugh, a

member of the board of directors for the nonprofit Pineapple Grove Main Street Inc.

Located in the Esplanade in the Grove plaza outside the entrance to the Miami City Ballet School, the sculpture not only attracts the attention of passersby, but it also provides a welcome place to sit.

The sculpture was transported to its present site from the Ann Norton Sculpture Gardens in West Palm Beach on a flatbed truck early Sept. 1. A crane and forklift were required to put it in

place.

Measuring 14 feet by 10 feet by 6 feet, it's made of concrete and steel, but resembles wood. The name of the artist, Kia Ricchi, is written on a brass placard on the ground beside it.

The sculptures arrival was a cooperative effort between Christiansen-Radabaugh, Pineapple Grove Main Street program manager Lou Waldmann and Ricchi, from St. Cloud. Officials hope the Artwalk will one day offer as many as 40 outdoor sculp-

tures.

"This is the first signature piece of the proposed Artwalk in Pineapple Grove," Radabaugh says. "We're very excited to see that first piece come in."

In other words, it's an appropriate addition to the up-and-coming tourist district.

Specializing in "creative seating," Ricchi says her sculptures are typically placed where there's a lot of pedestrian traffic. "I think it's a good idea to integrate art in urban environments," she says.



# ANN NORTON SCULPTURE GARDENS

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*The Ann Norton Sculpture Gardens, Inc. is an IRS-recognized 501(c)(3) operating foundation established in 1977 by the prominent sculptor Ann Weaver Norton (1905 - 1982) as an independent and locally unaffiliated entity. The residence is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The organization is devoted to exhibiting works of other artists, preserving the founder's studio and displaying her monumental sculptures in a secluded urban preserve where a notable collection of rare palms is continually being developed.*

★  
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April 1, 2000

Ms. Kia Ricchi  
Centerline Productions, Inc.  
4516 Pine Lake Drive  
St. Cloud, FL 34769

Dear Kia,

Congratulations on placing second in our Juried Art Exhibition held during the month on March 2000. Your "Creative Seating" sculpture is one of the highlights in the gardens and we thank you for allowing the Ann Norton Sculpture Gardens to display your work until the end of the season.

We look forward to our next Juried Exhibition and the opportunity to show very talented artists of your caliber. This Exhibition was a landmark milestone for the Ann Norton Sculpture Gardens. We are grateful for the relationships that were cultivated for this exhibition and we look forward to sharing the exciting potential our future holds with you.

Sincerely,

Phyllis H. Spencer  
Administrative Director