



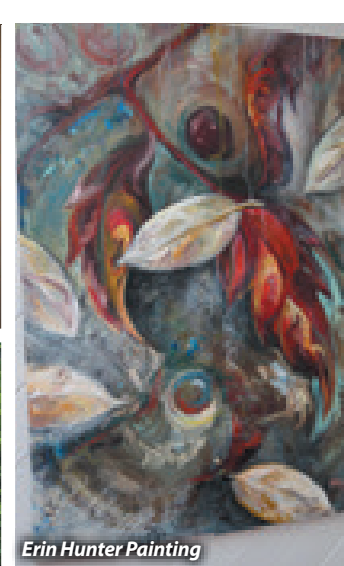
Erin's Piscine Art



Bird Bath Pottery



Fall Foliage



Erin Hunter Painting



Erin Hunter & Simplistic Stick Art



Back Yard Shed

Photos by Diann Turner  
Art by Erin Hunter



Erin Surrounded by Nature

# ERIN HUNTER: Inspiring Artist & Teacher

By Diann Turner

**I**t has been stated that if you feed the body food and drink it will survive today but if you feed the soul art and music, it will live forever.

Some folk's display a vulnerary sense of calm the minute you enter their world. Erin Hunter, teacher and artist achieves this instantly. Her amazing creativity jumps out as well, and you want to explore the works of her hands! Not many would take the time to paint wispy words on their steps and risers about "leaves whispering tall tales and telling truths."

Erin (Henry) was raised in Iroquois, Ontario on a poultry farm where her parents had a Bed & Breakfast for a time. Here, her imagination unfolded, and she found herself needing to self entertain and invent stories; all her friends lived in town. At seven, she began art classes with Brockville's Dianne Godwin-Sheridan. Erin remembers Dianne walking with groups of children all over the downtown. "During our walks, we would sketch boats, old buildings and the water fountain, then we would return and learn how to water colour our sketches," she said.

During her high school years, her dad took a transfer for a year in Naperville, Illinois, a suburb of Chicago. This was fortuitous for Erin because the cultural climate was rich with museums, festivals and an ingenious

arts programme at Naperville Central High School. With a student body of 2500, courses were abundant, and Erin took the jewelry making course and learned how to weld silver rings. In art class, she began to experiment using mixed media, constructing multi-layered works of art. "I had tons of homework in that school," Erin told me, "and I drew every night and learned life drawing."

Erin attended Waterloo University where she studied Fine Arts as a major and English as a minor. During university, Erin did a stint teaching art to seniors; they did their own thing, which confirmed she did not want to teach adults. She married Oak Hunter just out of high school and waited for him to complete university, so they could attend teacher's College at Queen's University.

After graduation, Erin got a job at Homer Watson House and Gallery museum in Kitchener, Ontario. Pay was skimpy, but she thrived in the atmosphere and loved her life there! "I taught art to little ones," she said. "Some of them were blind and I taught them how to do sculptures and photography by the water." At night, Erin curated at the museum and set up the gallery for art shows. Interestingly, there was an old stone house, and several little cabins where the Group of Seven hung out and painted!

Erin and Oak headed to Wha-ti in the Northwest territories to teach after graduation. They were the only two high school teachers in the town. Eighteen months later, they were both hired at Perth District High School. A few years later, Erin was offered Dave Sheridan's teaching position at Thousand Islands Secondary School, but went with her gut, and decided to teach English at Brockville Collegiate Institute.

Erin has a well-organized studio in her home. She is currently painting a sunset for someone in Toronto. "I did all my big paintings at an easel my Dad made for me," she said. This past winter, Erin painted moon rock props for the Brockville Dance Studio. "When I retire," she stated, "I'd like to teach therapeutic art to young people at risk." She tells young artists and writers to look for inspiration everywhere – "walk down the street and hear something, or find something, out of place." "Have your eyes and ears open," she admonishes. "Everything is beautiful. Art is about life. It can even be ugly because it is all about self expression."

I've had the privilege of watching Erin work with young people; she expertly imparts skills with a heart full of compassion and is a philanthropist in the true sense of the word.

**LH**