

a pattern of creativity

San Pedro artist re-examines her childhood to produce a book that catches the Getty Center's attention



By Josh Grossberg
DAILY BREEZE

Her strict father worked in the garment industry, and when Carol Es was growing up, he put her to work cutting patterns for him, often late into the night.

She couldn't escape fast enough — she left home at 13 — but the long hours she spent working on the floor of the family's San Fernando Valley home preparing fabric had seeped deep into her consciousness.

Now a 37-year-old artist living in San Pedro, the relics of her young life permeate her art: pins, patterns, scissors, threads, stitching and pieces of clothing appear in much of her work.

"I took this idea from my job as a kid and ran with it," she said. "Since I was 10, I cut patterns."

She collected some of her works in a small book, *I-SELF*, with each page made by hand on an 1890s letterpress. The cover features a common motif in her work: a round collar sometimes found on women's outfits.

It took her months to finish 50 copies of the book, and each one is signed and numbered. Last week, she sold No. 37 to the Getty Center in Brentwood.

Having one of the world's top art institutes put her work in its library is something the self-taught artist never imagined would happen.

"It hasn't really sunk in yet," she said at her studio in Angels Gate Cultural Center.

Her book caught the eye of Joyce Pellerano Ludmer, curator of artists' books at the Getty Research Institute, who decided to add it to the collection. The price was about \$375.

"I liked the fact that she was playing with — in a very witty but also innovative way — looking intimately at what's happened in her life," Pellerano Ludmer said. "She put her involvement since she was young in the clothing trade. It made sense to include her work in our collection."

There are about 5,000 such books available for viewing at the Getty.

For Es, doing art is a way of finding peace. After leaving home, she did just about anything to survive, sometimes selling paintings to buy food. Her first job was for a friend who bought a painting for a beauty salon.

"The first time somebody offered me money, it was enough for a meal," she said. "I just went to eat. But it gave me an idea that maybe I could sell more. I became more serious and ambitious."



BRUCE HAZELTON/DAILY BREEZE
Carol Es of San Pedro holds one of 50 copies of her handmade book, *I-SELF*. Each is signed and numbered. No. 37 was sold for about \$375 to the Getty Center.

Growing up was like living in a Dickens novel. She and her brother were often awakened at 3 a.m. and put to work by their stern father. That was only the beginning. Her Web site describes how she learned to express herself "wholly in her art after surviving childhood abuse, neglect, rape and disability."

Through hard work and dedication, she developed a reputation in the art world and her works began to appear in galleries.

■ To see some of Carol Es' art-work, visit www.esart.com.
■ To learn about the Getty Center's book collection, visit www.getty.edu/research.

"I think my bringing my background back was for therapeutic reasons," she said. "It's healing and I hated every minute of it, but bringing it back was a way for me to understand my parents."

It hasn't really sunk in yet.

— CAROL ES, on the Getty Center purchasing her book



Es, 37, used an 1890s letterpress to create the pages of *I-SELF*, a work that forced her to explore her painful childhood. "I hated every minute of it," she says.

