

# See a pattern here?

Julie Richey works her mosaic magic on all kinds of spaces

By **NANCY MYERS**  
Special Contributor

**A** vibrant mural celebrating life, food, and friendship is among the latest one-of-a-kind designs from mosaic artist Julie Richey, whose creations have enriched many a Dallas home since the 1990 inception of Oggetti Marble Mosaics.

Ms. Richey is known for her work with individual clients as a home construction and remodeling consultant. Through intricate patterns, she has blended her artist's touch into domestic elements of all shapes and forms, from fireplaces, tables and floors to bath and kitchen elements.

A natural extension of Ms. Richey's talents on the home front is the "Good Friends" mixed-media mosaic wall surrounding the patio of the new North Dallas restaurant Chic From Barcelona. Inspired by the lively, colorful works of Spanish artists Pablo Picasso and Antonio Gaudi and based on the concepts of innovative elementary schoolers, it symbolizes the friendship between the families of Ms. Richey and husband-and-wife restaurateurs Rafa Vilaclara and Magda Onandia.

The mural's design originated with Las Colinas Elementary School fourth-graders, who were studying the methods of Picasso.



Photos by NATALIE CAUDILL/Staff Photographer

**Julie Richey's daughters**, Claire (left), 10, and Kate, 7, contributed to the mural for Chic From Barcelona restaurant. This segment is based on Claire's art.

Each student had to make a three-face composition, outlining the faces in glue on black paper and filling them in with bright, colorful patterns. Ms. Richey found the students' art projects irresistible and acquired a stack, including her older daughter's, at a school event and auction where the kids' portraits were on display.

## Stroke of genius

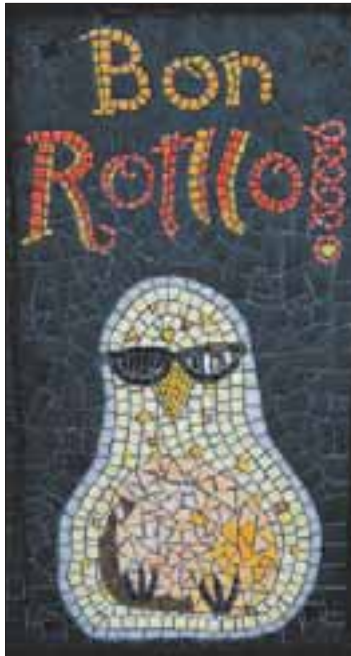
It turned out to be "one of those right-place, right-time things," Ms. Richey says. Having already agreed to incorporate her mosaic work into the design scheme at Chic (pronounced "chick"), Ms. Richey and the restaurant's owners, at a loss for specific ideas, were brainstorming a couple of days later when Ms. Richey remembered the drawings, still in the trunk of her car.

"I said, 'Wait a minute,' and ran out and got them," the artist recalls, and it was quickly realized that with the correct technique, these could be perfect for the mosaic. Chic's owners invited some of their friends' children to create faces for the mural as well, adding an extra dose of international flavor to the group of young participants.

Young Rafa and Magda (the couple's son and daughter) and Ms. Richey's two daughters, Claire and Kate, were among the 23 aspiring artists, ranging in age from 5 to 11, whose works are represented in the permanent exhibition.

After receiving permission from all the students to use their images, Ms. Richey composed a 52-foot mural using unglazed ceramic, enameled glass and Venetian millefiori beads. "I tried to stay with the colors and composition of the students' artwork, but made a few artistic

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**The Catalan inscription** on the Chic From Barcelona mosaic means “good vibes.”

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decisions,” Ms. Richey says.

At Mr. Vilaclara’s suggestion, the phrase “bon rotllo,” which in Catalan means “good vibes,” was incorporated, aptly describing the underlying theme of the months-long process and the free-flowing, spirited camaraderie of those involved. Fellow mosaic artists from varying locations flew in to help Ms. Richey with much of the more-tedious tiling and grouting near the end of the project.

### Domestic kaleidoscope

Ms. Richey’s creations have made their way into private homes from Dallas to La Jolla, Calif., to Menorca, Spain. She’s also increasingly involved with the public art sector, having spearheaded two large public art projects for the city of Irving, which featured outdoor sculpture installations and student participation workshops. She recently relocated the studio to a larger space, allowing for more commissions and collaboration with a neighbor in the custom concrete business. Together they’re working on a series of garden urns with inlaid mosaic, and are pouring custom countertops with inlaid recycled glass for a home in Oak Cliff.

Another project, the Southlake



Photos by NATALIE CAUDILL/Staff Photographer

**At the Southlake home of Sondra and Roger Lehman,** Julie Richey created a kitchen backsplash with stained glass and river rock.

home of Sondra and Roger Lehman, illustrates Ms. Richey’s abilities to transform rooms into works of art. Mosaic touches at the Lehmans’ include a stunning kitchen backsplash with stained glass and natural river rock.

“It was created to remind them of the lake in Canada where they spend summers,” Ms. Richey says. “They gave me a page from their photo album with several lake views.”

A slate entryway carpet decks the front foyer floor, and Ms. Richey shopped with Ms. Lehman to select materials, including tiles to match a travertine sink the owner found for a guest bath, and borders and tiles for the Lehmans’ son’s bath.

A glass mosaic series of stripes lines the pool shower in the pool bath, and the master shower features a slate pattern with a cutout of the Canadian Rocky Mountains. For the daughter’s bath, a mixed-media mosaic spelling out the young girl’s name “probably has more labor and costly materials in it” than any of Ms. Richey’s other custom work

in the house, she says, despite the fact that the yellow tile was purchased in a closeout sale.

Ms. Richey says the Lehmans are “a close-knit, active family, involved in sports and travel. Their house is not just a social center, it’s a family center.

“One of the things I love most about mosaic art is that it can involve your family and friends. In some cases, they are the inspiration; in others, the enthusiastic volunteers.”

*Nancy Myers is a Dallas free-lance writer.*

### RESOURCES

**LEARN:** Julie Richey shares her knowledge through a series of classes at Dallas’ Creative Arts Center, 2360 Laughlin Drive. The next session begins Oct. 24. 214-320-1275, creativeartscenter.org.

**SEE:** The Good Friends is at Chic From Barcelona, 11909 Preston Road, Suite 1426, Preston Forest Square. 972-239-2442, chicbarcelona.com.

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**The Lehman home** also features Ms. Richey’s entryway mosaic, turning an interior space into a work of art.