



Photos courtesy of Suzi Davidoff and Rachel Thiewes

**Rachelle Thiewes, left, and Suzi Davidoff** will give a talk, "The Fiskars Residency: Our Experience in Finland," at 12:45 p.m. Wednesday at The Percolator, 217 N. Stanton.

They hiked daily, racking up more than 300 miles on their pedometers (and lost weight in the process). They took the seven-hour train ride to St. Petersburg, where, with the advice of former resident and current El Paso artist Lyuba Titovets, they soaked up what Davidoff calls the grandeur of the city's Historic Centre and visited the esteemed Hermitage museum.

"It was stunning," Thiewes said of the experience.

"It's a beautiful, really vibrant city," Davidoff added.

They spent time in Helsinki, which hosts an annual arts festival every August. "It has great design, lots of art deco, great architecture and it's a good city to walk in," Davidoff said. "There were more bikes than cars."

Their trip showed them just how much emphasis Finland puts on the arts. Design stores in Helsinki were filled with customers, not just artists or rich collectors.

"They support design and craft and arts," Thiewes said. "We don't experience that as much in the United States. There, you go into design stores and see normal people. They grow up with it."

The big adjustment upon their return was simply trying to keep the spirit and lessons they absorbed during their two months abroad. Finns walk or ride bikes everywhere and don't rely on cars the way Americans do. They also don't multi-task much.

"They do one thing at a time. They don't seem as stressed as we do," Davidoff said, adding that "we're trying to get the idea of not multi-tasking and staying focused."

But it hasn't been easy. "We realized that we're not spontaneous," Thiewes said. "Both of us have schedule books and we're scheduled to the max."

Since their return, they try to walk daily and squeeze in time in their maxed out calendars to work on their mysterious work-in-progress.

"We're really starting on it now," Davidoff said. "It's a body of work that's very much influenced by our collaboration and the time we spent there because we were able to think."

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# The Finnish influence

## El Paso artists say residency will take them in new directions

By Doug Pullen  
El Paso Times

EL PASO — Here's how artists Suzi Davidoff and Rachelle Thiewes spent their summer vacation: They lived for two months in an artists co-op in Finland; stayed six days in St. Petersburg; and visited Helsinki, the resort town of Hanko, the historic city of Turku and Estonia's arts-friendly Tallinn. Oh, and they hiked daily.

But this was no ordinary vacation.

Davidoff, who draws and paints landscapes and is a part-time art lecturer at the University of Texas at El Paso, and Thiewes, a metalsmith and art professor at UTEP, recently completed a two-month residency at the artists cooperative in the southern Finland village of Fiskars, where nearly half its 400 residents are artists and designers.

"We wanted to work on another collaborative piece. We've done two," said Davidoff, who is Thiewes' former student and long-time friend. "We thought this is the best way to do it. We'd have time to work on it."

### Make plans

- ▶ **What:** Exhibit of new work by Suzi Davidoff and Rachelle Thiewes.
- ▶ **When:** Opening reception, 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Wednesday. The exhibit will remain open through Dec. 31.
- ▶ **Where:** Adair Margo Fine Art, Martin Building, 215 N. Stanton, sixth floor.
- ▶ **Information:** 533-0048; [www.adairmargo.com](http://www.adairmargo.com).
- ▶ **Also:** Davidoff and Thiewes will give a talk, "The Fiskars Residency: Our Experience in Finland," at 12:45 p.m. Wednesday at The Percolator, 217 N. Stanton.

They'll discuss their travels in a free lecture, "The Fiskars Residency: Our Experience in Finland," at 12:45 p.m. Wednesday at



A painting by Suzi Davidoff, above, and jewelry by Rachelle Thiewes, at left, are among the works to be exhibited at Adair Margo Fine Art starting Wednesday. The pieces were created before the residency.

The Percolator. It follows a reception at 11 a.m. that day at Adair Margo Fine Art, where each artist will have five of her newest works — monotypes and monoprints by Davidoff; exotic, metallic-colored jewelry from the "Heat" series by Thiewes — through Dec. 31.

"Suzi and Rachelle are extraordinary El Paso artists with international reach," Margo said. "They have helped me look more closely at my surroundings — things like how shadows are cast and how grasses move — through their work."

"I've shown both since starting my gallery in 1985, and I'm very excited about these stunning recent pieces. I'm also looking forward to sharing the individual or collaborative work" from the Finland residency, Margo said.

Both Davidoff and Thiewes are internationally known and collected artists who typically use the Southwestern landscape for their muses. But, Thiewes notes, they were looking for something new, so they ap-

plied for the Fiskars Artist Residency last year.

"We wanted to be somewhere in a different landscape and see if it would feed our work," she said.

Apparently it has. Just don't ask them what they've come up with. They can't really say just yet.

"Everybody wants to know, to see pieces of it, but we'll feel better to present it as a finished piece," Davidoff said.

That probably won't happen until next fall.

The Fiskars Artist Residency, established in 2006, accepts a dozen artists per two-month term. The El Paso artists had a free place to stay, sharing a duplex with an artist from Virginia. They had to pay for their own transportation and meals and provide their own materials. They took "almost next to nothing" in terms of supplies so as not to restrict their imaginations, Thiewes said.

"We specifically wanted to go in without a real defined idea," Davidoff said. "We wanted to react to what was there."