



CLIENT STORIES

MENDOCINO COAST OFFICE

760 B Stewart St, Fort Bragg, CA 95437
PHONE (707) 964-7571 • FAX (707) 964-7576

MENDOCINO INLAND OFFICE

631 S. Orchard, Ukiah, CA 95482
PHONE (707) 467-5931 • FAX (707) 467-5930

GLENN COUNTY OFFICE

420 W Walker St., Orland, CA 95963
PHONE (530) 990-5801



Erica Fielder Studio

the evolution of an artist in commerce

Erica Fielder's business story is the story of a life journey that would eventually combine her love of nature and her need to create fine art. By 1983 her two passions had come

West Company Client Stories – Erica

together when she began making interpretive panels for parks and preserves along California's coast. The panels perfectly blended her interest in ecosystems, art and a desire to inspire people to take care of the natural world.

ECO ARTIST



The trail to the **Erica Fielder Studio** includes the creation of Ecology for City Kids, a program of outdoor nature-related activities for the classroom. Erica also trained as a wilderness expedition leader and co-founded Women in the Wilderness. In the 80's, she was hired as resident naturalist at a nature center located on

the north coast of California. All the while, she painted, drew and sculpted and - she says - wondered how she could ever resolve the two distinct elements of an income stream working in the environmental field and an innate desire to create fine art.

Well, she's done it! And the world is richer for her interpretative panels and sculptures depicting plants and animals, their habits, lifecycles and migrations. Erica's art and stewardship messages are found along trails and parklands throughout California and as close to home as the Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens. She has taught eco-art at Miami-Dade Community College and is co-founder of the Eco-Art Dialogue, an international collection of eco-artists who participate in an ongoing online Eco-Art conversation. In September, 2007 Erica was the Artist-in-Residence at the San Francisco Exploratorium where she worked on converting interior exhibits to the outdoors and into the natural world. "Get those kids (of all ages) outside!" was her cry.

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Erica also travels the technology learning curve as technology is critical to the production of her interpretive panels. To start the process, Erica makes the art in her studio (the location has several past lives including housing a pea cannery – thus the pea green door to her studio). The work is scanned or photographed into digital format; panels are designed in graphics software for layout and typography and sent to fabricators for final production – a far cry from the watercolors and pastels she was using in the 1980's and 90's.

What role did West Company play in the success of the Erica Fielder Studio? Erica gives West Company credit for helping with the technical aspects of her business, primarily understanding and interpreting finance and marketing. She now checks income and expenses monthly and has created a customer data base to manage ongoing communication with her clients.

Erica Fielder Studio is a leader in the re-emergence of artisans as an economic force. “Artists are in commerce no matter if you paint one canvas to sell or produce thousands of mugs to sell. It took me years to realize that my art is commercial work and as a matter of fact, art has always been a commodity and more valuable than gold or jewels. Look at masterpiece art today; it sells in the millions of dollars - that is art in commerce.” Erica is combining nature, fine art and technology to position herself in the new artisan economy – small and personal businesses producing one of a kind specialty goods for customers who seek unique, customized, and niche products. What a treasure!

West Company Client Stories – Erica

West Company/Mendocino SBDC/Women’s Business Center have offices in Fort Bragg (760B Stewart Street, 964-7571) and Ukiah (631 S. Orchard Street, 462-5931) and a web page at www.westcompany.org



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