

DETAILED DELIGHT

Jackie Krzyzowski never had any formal training but always enjoyed drawing as a child. She used one private workshop and various online tutorials to get her started with pastels. She explains further:



'Scarlette' – 250 x 350mm. Soft pastel – Photo Ref: Own



I spent most of my adult life with horses and riding as a hobby and with family life, working full time and studying part time there was not much time for anything else. I always thought that one day I might come back to my art. Getting older, I was not fit enough to carry on with the horse riding and moved to breeding and showing miniature horses. This was successful for 10 years, but again, getting older, mobility issues were making this hobby more difficult and so I decided to retire from it. Then came COVID lockdown and I was looking for something to do and now I am on this new, amazing art journey.

Art is really still a hobby for me. I still work and I have to check whether I have any work to do each day before I head down to my studio (converted bedroom). I enjoy the creative process. I love seeing the picture come to life on the paper. My first idea was to specialise in animal portraiture but I have a bit of a competitive streak in me and I like to challenge myself with other subjects, just to see if I can do it. Every new picture is a new adventure for me.

Initially my favourite subject was animals. I love animals and I wanted to bring them to life on the page. The eyes are critical in being able to reveal the character and soul of the animal and that is key for me. I can spend a lot of time getting the eye and the light in the eye just right.

Nature also inspires me – flowers, fruit and even vegetables. Although landscapes generally do not inspire me, I quite like water and the ability to express the mood and the movement of water, so the sea and water scenes are on my list of inspirational topics. My style is realism/photorealism, and I am inspired to recreate what I see in

the three dimensional world in the two dimensional world of paper. I don't think I am in the same league as those artists who specialise in hyper-realism, I'm not sure I could ever be that good, but I am inspired by capturing the little details. It's funny how a little bit of white in just the right place can bring something to life.

There are some amazing artists in the world but my main inspiration comes from the pastel artists who share the same passion for realism. Veronique du Boisrouvray creates the most amazing portraits, Jason Morgan, the wildlife artist, Angela Franke, animal artist and I would be remiss if I didn't mention Colin Bradley – the English pastel artist that has the ability to bring pastel art to the people through his amazing online tutorials. His teaching style is easy and simple to understand and he is responsible for getting me to where I am today. In New Zealand my main inspiration is Julie and Michael Freeman. Their pastel work is world class and they are internationally recognised and respected in many countries.

The creative process is what I love most about being an artist. I am never bored when I am in my studio. The problems, stresses and issues of the real world disappear, and it is just me, in my creative space, putting the marks on the paper, one by one, so that they come together to create the whole picture. I enjoy the intensity of it and the focus needed to continually assess and correct my work as I go. Is this right? Does it look OK? Does it gel with the bit I did before? Are the marks in the right direction? Are they too thick or too thin, or the right tone? I am constantly adjusting the work until it gets to look right to me. I have to strive to achieve the result I want and I love that feeling of achievement that this gives me.

I like to enter my work in competitions/exhibitions so that it can be displayed in a public venue or online and it is very exciting if one of the works manages to gain an award. I guess this is my competitive streak coming out, but I also don't mind if no award comes my way. In my opinion, judging is subjective and only one person's view as to what they perceive is the best work on that day. Another day, another judge might select a totally different group of work.

It is also humbling to be recognised when there are so many good artists in an exhibition. The best prize to win, in my opinion, is people's choice. In this you are being judged by a wider audience who find the work appealing. A lot of international pastel exhibitions are held online and sometimes there are close to 1,000 entries. Just to be accepted is a real thrill as it doesn't always happen.

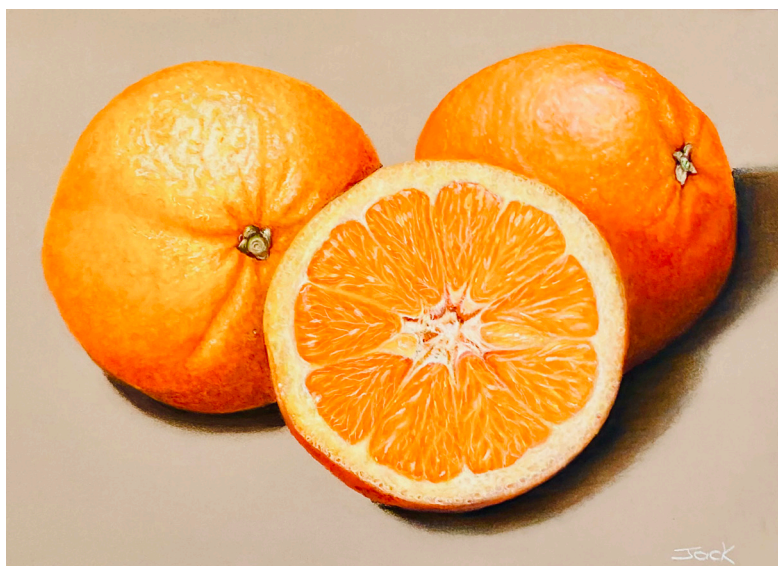
I hope in time to gain some recognition so that people viewing the work recognise my style and can associate the artwork with me. I can do this with other artists – e.g., in a PANZ (Pastel Artists of NZ) pastel exhibition I can walk around the room and pick out certain artist's work.

I am working towards gaining my PANZ points. It will take many years to reach the various levels, but I

AOTEAROA ARTIST - March/April 2023



'Bananas' – 297 x 210mm. Soft pastel – Photo Ref: Own



'Two and a Half Oranges' – 297 x 210mm. Soft pastel – Photo Ref: Pixabay – Free Use



'Green Apples' – 297 x 210mm. Soft pastels – Photo Ref: Pixabay – Free Use



'Pears' – 250 x 350mm. Soft pastel – Photo Ref: Pixabay – Free Use



'Pansies' – 250 x 350mm. Soft pastel – Photo Ref: Kelly Goslin, Free Reference Photos for Artists (FB)

have the time and with practice, improvement and patience I think I will get there.

It takes me 25-40 hours to complete the animal portraits, depending on whether there is a full background included, and I have just finished a white cat portrait for my daughter's birthday. I had never created a white cat before so it was a bit scary. White animals are not white – they have creams and browns, pinks and greys and sometimes even blue in the coat colour. The colour can change with the depth of the fur. I was pleased with how it came out.

My next project will be pansies and after that the Keirunga Artists Group has a fun photo challenge which is a landscape – not my true forte as I have mentioned before, but it will challenge me to move outside my comfort zone and see what I can do.

I am very proud of the Honourable Mention for 'The Rabbit' in the 2021 Online 'Purely Pastel' Competition – Juror Lyn Diefenbach. Although this was for members only, PANZ had international members enter from half a dozen other countries, so this was an international event and the standard was very high. I was very proud of this achievement as it was very early days in my art journey. Also, winner of the Keirunga Artists 2021 Autumn Exhibition with 'Broken Egg' - Judge Brent Redding and People's Choice at the same event with 'Game On'.

Gaining acceptance into the Southeastern Pastel Society (USA) 2022 'Make Your Mark' International Online Exhibition with 'Oranges' – Juror Tony Allain was a definite highlight and of course, my first sale. I have had other sales since, but the first time I could hardly believe that someone wanted to purchase my work and in hindsight, that was a pretty proud moment.

I am fortunate that I have a great work/life balance so I have the time to dedicate to my art and this enables me to strive for continuous improvement, and when this striving for improvement is so pleasurable, you want to keep doing it and so it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. Many people do not have the time or the



'Chloe' – 300 x 300mm. Soft pastel – Photo Ref: Own



'Frankie' – 250 x 350mm. Soft pastel – Photo Ref: Pixabay – Free Use

dedicated studio space to achieve this, so I feel very fortunate to be in this position.

The greatest obstacle I faced in my journey was that, in the beginning, I couldn't see all of the detail so work I produced looked coarse and immature. I also struggled to interpret colour and tone. I think that when you are learning a new skill that your brain becomes overloaded with information and it likes to simplify things for you so that, when you are trying to reproduce something, you think it looks like this, but in reality, it is much more complex. As you improve and your brain gets used to understanding and interpreting what it is looking at, it starts to identify detail in a more granular way and so the results get better and better. I still struggle with colour a bit, but hopefully with practice and over time, this will become easier. Some examples: If you look at a crystal vase – what colour is that and how would I reproduce that? Also, what colour green is that? There are literally a hundred green hues and tones, so what am I actually seeing and which of my colours would I use to reproduce this. It is a fascinating topic and those who have been formally trained probably don't have these issues but for those that are learning as they go I think this is a thing.

For new artists, I say, try again. If something isn't working, keep working on it and it will usually come right. Pastel, as a medium, is very forgiving and you can layer and blend with it. Being a dry medium, you can also remove with a brush or malleable eraser it and redo the work. A couple of times



'Abutilon Trio' – 250 x 350mm. Soft pastel – Photo Ref: Own

I have finished the work, looked at it and not been happy so I have binned it, but that hasn't happened very often as most situations are salvageable. The other thing is to ask for someone else's opinion. My husband is my greatest critic and he is not afraid to say that this or that looks off. I don't take it personally (some people might) as I know that he is trying to help me improve the work and it's not about me personally. Sometimes you can get too close to the work and you need to leave it for a day and come back to it with a fresh pair of eyes.

I am a member of PANZ – Pastel Artists of New Zealand and a member of Keirunga Artists Group in Havelock North where I hold the position of Secretary.

At Keirunga we have a small group of pastel artists that meet each week. Art as a hobby can be very insular and participating in our group provides a social outlet with like minded people where we can discuss our issues or roadblocks, have a laugh and share our lunch together. It provides companionship and I really enjoy my time with the group every week.

PANZ is more of a professional body and they have put Pastel Art on the map in New Zealand. Prior to PANZ pastel was not recognised as an individual art medium. They have encouragement programmes (e.g., the Points programme), hold one Exhibition/Convention every year, provide opportunities to apply for funding for development courses and run a bi-monthly challenge based on specific topics. PANZ is run by a dedicated group of pastel artists, has regions



'Red Hot Chilli Peppers' – 250 x 350mm. Soft pastel – Photo Ref: Don Barrick, Free Reference Photos for Artists (FB)

covering most of New Zealand and we are very fortunate to have these people working for us.

Animal portraiture is probably my favourite subject. I specialise in domestic and farm animals rather than wildlife such as lions and tigers.

I solely work in pastel, mainly pastel pencils of various brands, but also pastel sticks and pan pastels if I have bigger areas of a background or sky. I love the flexibility of pastels, the fact that it is a different way of applying pigment to paper media and the different effects that you can create using it. It layers and blends really well and it's not messy apart from a bit of dust.

I mainly work from a photo as animals don't stay still for long enough to do anything else. Sometimes the animal has passed away and the only thing available is a photo. I use my computer screen to enlarge .jpg photo images so that I can see which way the hair/fur goes and to drill down into the detail. Without this, I doubt I could achieve the level of detail that I want in my paintings.

I use a programme called Visio to compose the picture. To do this I import the picture and then size it to suit and crop it to the size/shape that I want to work with. I transfer a copy of this onto my pastelmat paper making sure that I have the proportions and angles correct and that it is positioned nicely on the page. I select my colour palette from my range of pastels and decide how I am going to work on each area.

I start at the top left and start applying the colour, base layers first and then work up the detail on top. Sometimes I can go over an area many times layering the hair in different directions to achieve the depth. It is very important to get the top layer in the right direction and to layer the hair as it grows in real life. I work from dark to light mostly, however I sometimes have to add back the darks to create the contrast or create a shadowed area. If the colour is not quite right I very lightly glaze the area with an appropriate colour so that I don't lose the details. It can take a lot of patience and many layers to create the desired result.

I work down the left hand side and then across the page. This is because I am right handed and I don't want to put my hand on my finished work as pastel smudges easily. This also helps to keep the page clean.

Every picture is a new adventure and as we all know, new things can be a bit overwhelming. Even if I have done a dozen cats before, this one will be different. I always start with an ear, because once I have done that it gives me the confidence to go on.

I prefer to work in silence. I like the peace and quiet. Just the birds outside and the breeze in the trees is enough. I'm in my own little world, so I don't need any noise.

I work – my husband and I run two cybersecurity businesses. We have a farmstay, Verano Country Stay, that tends to be occupied from Labour Weekend to Easter mainly on weekends and holidays. We are located on a lifestyle block with 10 miniature ponies, four sheep, three chickens and four cats. I am also on the Keirunga Artists Group Committee.

For new artists, don't be discouraged if you don't think your work is very good. People often talk about having a special gift or talent to be an artist. Talent helps for sure, but practice is what gets you across the line. I have kept a copy of every piece I have created since I have started and the improvement in two years is phenomenal. I aim to complete one artwork a week. Doesn't always work out, but I still manage around 48 paintings a year. That's a lot of practice. Ask for the opinion of others. You might not agree with them, but they might look at your work with a different perspective.

Learn the rules around good composition and then, if you want to, break them. I am talking about the rule of thirds, the Fibonacci spiral, focal point etc.

Attend workshops or do online tutorials. Experience takes years to accumulate and if people offer to share their tips and techniques with you, it will help get you to where you want to be a lot faster.

I had a small exhibition (10-12 pieces) in Napier (CAN) in October 2022 and again in February 2023. I had work on display in Hastings as part of a Hawkes Bay Artists Exhibition and I participate in the HB Art Trail which is part of the HB Art Festival over Labour Weekend.

I have work in New Zealand and in the USA.

[See more about Jackie here: https://www.jackiek-art.nz](https://www.jackiek-art.nz)