

A PASSION FOR THE PECULIAR

Buderim artist Teresa Mundt creates exuberant artworks bursting with charm and whimsy. After trying her hand at a variety of careers, she is now a full-time artist and has gained an international following by sharing high-speed videos of her painting process. Words: Leigh Robshaw.

Buderim artist Teresa Mundt is scribbling over the top of a canvas splashed with a riot of colours. It's an old landscape painting she never finished and she wants to transform it into something new. She turns the canvas round and round, searching for a line, a feeling, a look. She spots an eye and a pigtail and begins to paint a girl holding a bird. Two minutes later, *Girl and Guinea Fowl* has popped out of the canvas as if by magic to become one of the strongest works in her new series, which she'll exhibit as artist in residence at the upcoming Immanuel Arts Festival.

It didn't really take two minutes, though. It's one of Mundt's popular high-speed videos, which she shares on her website and social media channels to demonstrate the unconventional painting process she uses to create her whimsical, charming artworks. Using acrylics on canvas, her work is a fusion of cartoon, caricature and bold colour exploring themes of joy, contentment, humour, and life's simple pleasures. Her most popular works depict stylised animals, because she believes "pets are the embodiment of unconditional love".

Mundt conducts art workshops for adults and regularly exhibits in solo and group art exhibitions across South-East Queensland. While her works are represented in collections in Australia and overseas, she downplays her success.

"I'm not a brilliant painter or drawer and there's an awful lot of artists to compete with so if your artwork isn't absolutely mesmerising, you've got to have something to draw people in, which is why I do the high-speed videos," she says.

It's one thing to film yourself painting and edit out what you don't like. It's another thing to paint live in front of people who can see your every brushstroke, which is what she'll be doing as the artist in residence at the 27th Immanuel Arts Festival.

"It's absolutely horrifying," she laughs. "I'm dreading it. Having someone looking over your shoulder while you're painting is the worst thing, especially when you stuff something up. To be honest, I don't think I've been in a situation like this before, I find it a bit daunting."

While she's her own worst critic, after turning art into her full-time occupation over the past few years, Mundt feels like she's on the right path.



IMAGE: DAVID SHEARER

"I do spend a lot of my time looking at the work of artists and I think, I'd give anything to be able to draw and paint like that. You can fall into a trap of beating yourself up but the more you do it, the better you get. If you draw or paint every day you get better, fast. It's good to look back on your work and then imagine the sort of work you'll be producing in 10 years from now."

The first work she sold was a watercolour landscape at the age of 16, but going further back, she remembers a book she made in primary school, which she still has.

"As a child, my whole world revolved around art," she says. "I spent 12 years in my room painting and drawing and I don't think I came up for air. I remember writing a book about a

family of emus in grade three. We were supposed to do a two-page assignment and my book was 40 pages long and full illustrated. I was so immersed in it."

She grew up on a farm in Bell, near the Bunya Mountains, in a family of farmers and labourers who didn't discourage her love of art, but didn't encourage it either.

"You grow up with this idea that to earn an honest living you have to work hard in some sort of labouring capacity. It wasn't until I was entering my late 20s and 30s that I thought hang on, maybe I could actually do something with this."

After studying business and majoring in advertising at university, Mundt had a "hodge-podge" of career roles from marketing and HR to real estate and IT before she decided at the age of 30 to follow her true passion.

"I went through many years of being a frustrated artist where I was dying to paint, but I just didn't have the ideas coming. I went to an exhibition when my daughter was a baby and saw the work of Jane Donaldson. She was at home with three kids and she painted really whimsical, cartoony things about her everyday life. Funny creatures, her with her kids crawling on top of her. I thought, it's OK to paint about your own boring life and you can make it colourful and fun. It gave me permission to paint about my everyday life without having to find a profound looking landscape or a magnificent looking sunset."

Mundt lies in bed at night watching characters pop into her head, which she then turns into her bright, abstract pieces bursting with charm and personality.

"It is of no interest to me to observe a thing in nature and painstakingly attempt to recreate it in paint. I never paint from life, or from photographs – I close my eyes and paint the images inside my head. I love the challenge of dragging something from the depths of my imagination and bringing it to life. I think it helps to remind others too that their imaginations are powerful and infinite."

Immanuel Arts Festival is on May 25 to 28 at Immanuel Lutheran College, Buderim. Proudly supported by *My Weekly Preview*.