

SINCE SWAPPING CORPORATE LIFE FOR A PAINTING SMOCK, TRACEY KELLER HAS MADE IT HER MISSION TO MAKE PEOPLE SMILE.

painting with passion



Let Bartercard and Tracey Keller splash some colour into your life... you can even hang it on the wall.

Step inside Tracey Keller's funky gallery at Brisbane's London Woolstores and you'll immediately see why her name is synonymous with vibrant colour, quirky themes, and the pure, unadulterated joy of living. One thing is certain, neither Tracey's artworks, nor the artist herself, could ever be described as a shrinking violet. Her paintings are bold, beautiful, and guaranteed to stand out wherever they hang, which they do in some very exclusive places.

Since swapping corporate life for a painting smock, Tracey has made it her mission to "make people smile" through artworks that have been exhibited and collected around the world.



Tracey's paintings have been shown widely throughout Australia, as well as Japan, France, Italy, Switzerland, the UK, and America's cultural capital, New York. Despite her success, Tracey is far too grounded to become a tall poppy in need of emergency pruning.

Responding to reports that she received commissions from A-list celebrities while in the States, Tracey prefers to reminisce about the experience. "I'm not into name dropping," she says, "but I can tell you I lived in New York for three months, painted heaps of pictures, got to see inside some amazing houses, and had an incredible time. I've got the memories, the photographs and the T-shirt to prove it."

Just speaking with Tracey is a good reason to smile, and she could easily be the pin-up girl for the power of positive thinking. "I'm a real believer in living with exuberance," she says. "If you think rich and live life to the fullest, then more riches are sure to follow."

This attitude is omnipotent in her painting. Tracey's most recent collection of abstracts pulsates with an effervescent power that effortlessly stirs the emotions and forces you to react. But it is her quirky animal and pet portraits for which she is internationally renowned.

"I love animals," says Tracey, "and although I never set out to become known as a pet painter, I absolutely adore painting them, whether it's a cat, a dog, a turtle, a goat or an alpaca, they're all fascinating to capture."

After signing up for a new commission, her preferred method is to meet with the client and their pet at home. "I prefer to hang out with the animals and get to know them. It's also very important for me to listen to the client so I get a true sense of what they want, even if that means asking lots of silly questions. I also like to see where the painting is expected to hang, as the more I know the easier it is to see what will work," she says.

True to her craft Tracey believes that pet portraiture is more than just achieving a likeness to a particular animal. "I love feeling the idiosyncrasies of each animal. When I capture that on the canvas it is such a wonderful feeling and it can actually make me jump for joy. I'm so chuffed that I can be creative and channel this inspiration and that someone is willing to pay me to do this."

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Of course it has not just been someone but some many. Since joining Bartercard two years ago, Tracey has already become a Club Platinum member.

“I treat Bartercard the way I treat cash,” she says. “Everything from the range of limited edition prints to pet portrait commissions is available to members. I don’t believe in offering things 50-50. The way I see it, if we’re really wanting to drive Bartercard forward then we have to do it in the right way.”

When it comes to business and Bartercard Tracey is every inch the go-getter. She says, “If I see something I really want to buy and it’s not from a Bartercard member then I’ll go to the owner and tell them about Bartercard. Say it is a canvas manufacturer, I’d be in there saying, ‘Look, if I can guarantee that I’ll buy \$2,000 worth of canvases from you every month, would you be interested?’ If they say yes then I’ll go back to my Bartercard office at Brisbane East and give them the lead.”

Tracey says Bartercard represents a wonderful opportunity for informal networking and sharing of ideas, and that keeping in contact with Bartercard clients can bring major rewards.

“There are so many really positive, entrepreneurial business owners using Bartercard and it’s wonderful to be aligned with those people,” she says. “Members actually take the time to speak with each other and can be a real source of ideas and inspiration. I also think members have a tendency to be a bit freer with how they spend on Bartercard because they’re less inhibited than they are with cash.

“I realised when I joined Bartercard that it is an opportunity to get into a whole new market that probably wouldn’t come to you otherwise. I can honestly say it totally works for me,” she says.

Tracey has given her Bartercard a solid thrashing while promoting and upgrading her flagship gallery in the artistic heart of the city’s New Farm art district at Teneriffe.

“Everything that is essential in my gallery is paid for on Bartercard,” she says. “All the lighting, the furniture, the electrics, working materials and the lot is purchased on Bartercard. I’m always asking for advice from Bartercard Brisbane East and we make it work perfectly.”

The modernist design of the two-storey industrial warehouse is as bold as one of Tracey’s wacky roosters or Bob the cow, who she likes to paint skydiving or getting up to other extreme shenanigans. The grand walls of the building provide for 70 metres of hanging space, which Tracey has ample material to fill many times over so even regular browsers can always expect the unexpected.

A coffee shop and lounge area provides guests with the highlight of their visit — a ‘bird’s-eye view’ of the artist and her ‘works in progress’, plus an opportunity to chat and chew the cud with Tracey while she paints.

Opening hours are 10am -5pm Monday to Friday, and business hours over the weekend, unless she is out visiting pets who are having their portraits painted.

For more information and to view the online gallery, check out www.traceykeller.com.au

