

With over 150 murals already under her belt, artist George Rose has painted herself into a prodigious career path.

Street smarts



Image by Nicole Reed

Resene
RiptideResene
Chetwode
BlueResene
Paua

Artist George Rose believes growing up in the colourful decade that was the 90s is what led to her affection for colour. “I was a creative kid, and I was always headed in that direction,” she says, “so it made sense that I pursued a creative and commercial career path after graduating high school – which was graphic design.”

She says her career as a graphic designer was short-lived, though. “I think I failed at graphic design because it was such a rigid career. You’re basically being told by someone who isn’t creative to ‘just go do something creative’. I wanted much more of a challenge, and I despised being inside all day. But my training taught me the principles that all the creative disciplines need to understand – colour, hierarchy, scale and typography.”

George left her job and set off on her own as a multi-disciplinary freelance artist until 2015, when she met Eddie Zammit. “At the time, he was knee-deep in art direction and curatorial projects and he asked me a question no one else had: ‘if you could choose one thing to pursue, what would that be?’ It was a great question for someone like me who, until this point, had only been discovering what they didn’t want, as opposed to what they did.”

It was a pivotal moment for her, and she decided to focus on what she wanted to paint, which was – and still is – large-scale murals. “And the rest, as they say, is history,” she says. According to Eddie, beginning to work with George was equally pivotal for his career, too. “I would credit her for initiating my pursuit in representing artists,” he says.

Art director, artist manager, collaborator, collector, curator and networker are all titles that apply to Eddie. Over the course of his 25-year career, he has travelled and worked between Melbourne, New York and Sydney, exercising his aptitude and enthusiasm for his key passions of art and design. These days, his business runs as part agency and part art consultant.

“Curating projects was a natural progression from my many years of art direction,” he says.

“After first meeting George at a gallery opening, we decided to meet for a coffee. As George is more than ten years younger than me, I thought, based on my experience, I could pass on some sound advice and help focus her direction,” Eddie recalls. “But as the story goes, I asked her a question about her future

above left: Can’t Do Tomorrow was a celebration of urban art and contemporary culture in one of the most iconic underground spaces in Australia – The Facility. Across 10 days, over 15,000 people immersed themselves in a new way of consuming, or being consumed, by art. George was the centre-point of the show and was asked to paint the talk auditorium, which was purpose-built for the event. She used Resene Lumbersider in Resene Black, Resene California, Resene Canary, Resene Chetwode Blue, Resene Governor Bay, Resene Grenadier, Resene Malibu, Resene Paua, Resene Riptide, Resene Smitten, Resene Spritzer and Resene Switched On to colour the piece, which is titled ‘No Bed of Roses’. Image by Holly Hawkins, www.hollyhawkins.com.

above right: Artist George Rose at work on her mural for this year’s Home mural festival, titled ‘Gotta Hold on You’. Image by Holly Hawkins.





-  Resene White
-  Resene Smitten
-  Resene Havoc
-  Resene Geronimo
-  Resene Adrenalin
-  Resene Clockwork Orange
-  Resene Riptide
-  Resene Chetwode Blue
-  Resene Governor Bay
-  Resene Black

right: The colours chosen for this mural George completed for AMP Capital, titled 'The Berra' were inspired by the Australian landscape. Earthy tones complement the green leaves in summer and bring warmth to the area in winter when the deciduous plants have shed their foliage. George used Resene Lumbersider in Resene Adrenalin, Resene Clockwork Orange, Resene Daredevil, Resene Galliano, Resene Havoc, Resene Persian Red and Resene White. Image by Nicole Reed, www.nicolereed.photography.



goals and she was a little stumped. It certainly was not planned, but it provided her with some clarity. I like to invest my own time into those who are willing to work hard and are ambitious by nature. George fits the mould perfectly.”

“Eddie has been both my mentor and representation since then,” explains George. One wall led to another, and more than 150 murals and 1,500 litres of Resene paint later, she says she can see how her art practice has evolved.

“Now, looking back on the last five years, I see how important it was to narrow down what I wanted to achieve. I’ve been rewarded with the opportunity to travel to nine different countries painting, learning and honing my skills.”

George says that her style is constantly evolving and something very personal, but many of her murals have a street art flair to them. “My style has developed over time based on a combination of interests and experiences. I was always obsessed with street art but never dreamed it could be a viable career. There were no easy paths into painting murals for a living. But what can I say? I thrive on challenges.”

“When I started painting, the mural and street art scene was largely – and, in a way, still is – male-dominated. It was important to me that my art was valued for the strength of the style and not on my gender. With this in mind, I developed a style that is bold and graphic. I paired this aesthetic with a softer subject matter. I aim for a certain amount of juxtaposition within my work,” she explains.

“Currently I have three distinct styles in my practice, which range from abstract to more illustrative botanical themes. I often incorporate oversized brushstrokes and gradients, which are my signature traits. I use my spray guns to assist in getting the vibrant colour and impact I want to my murals. A lot of my style is derived from my love of colour theory and confident line work.”

While spray cans are the medium of choice for some street artists, it’s not one that allows their work longevity. And for the amount of time and energy that George puts into her work, fading and flaking isn’t something she’s willing to tolerate. “I’m a bit of a self-confessed paint nerd,” she says. “I like to know about the products I use. I want to use what’s best for the job and what will achieve the best outcomes. I think I dabbled in spray paint initially, but I came to the conclusion pretty fast that I wanted my walls to stand the test of time. I wanted my colours to continue to look vibrant as the walls aged. You just don’t see spray paint wearing the same as professional paint that’s meant for walls. The issue I faced was finding a brand that had the vivid bright colours that didn’t take a million coats to achieve an opaque finish. And the integrity and quality of the paint definitely plays into why I use Resene for my murals.”

“What I like about Resene products is the colour range, the coverage, the paint consistency and the vibrancy. These are all really important factors with my works and I’ve experimented with a lot of other paints in several countries – but Resene wins.”

opposite: A close up of George’s piece from the 2020 Home mural festival, which is painted in Resene Lumbersider in Resene Black, Resene Chetwode Blue, Resene Geronimo, Resene Riptide, Resene Smitten and Resene Governor Bay. Image by Holly Hawkins.



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“I have a few colours that I regularly use. Some of my current favourites include Resene Adrenalin, Resene California and Resene Spritzer. There isn’t another paint on the market that can cover as well in the colour palette I use. It’s the reason I fell in love with Resene paint years ago.”

George’s love of the outdoors and being in the sun is part of what drew her to becoming a muralist, but so was the physicality that the job offers. “Painting large walls requires the use of your whole body, so much of it feels like dancing to me. I’ve always been a very active person and terrible at desk jobs. There is a theatre to painting at such a large-scale, being in the public eye and out in the open. You have to be comfortable with a certain amount of external stimulus that you can’t control including the weather and unplanned interactions with people.”

When it comes to inspiration, George says that creating artwork isn’t a matter of finding it. “It’s knowing what your visual voice is and how best to use it when responding to each project. My artistic philosophy is that art can be a combination of visual communication and problem solving. It’s an endeavour where I have to use my own visual language to express an idea. With each new idea, I’m usually responding to something, which might ask for a particular feeling or represent aspects of a client’s personality.”

Something that sets George apart from many street artists is the breadth of commercial projects she has completed, and how many of those commissions have been indoors. Her eye-catching colours and fluid style bring energy and character to offices, shops, theatre auditoriums, high-end hotels and many other places where you might not expect to find street art. The result is a space that’s much more engaging to be in, one that draws you in and elicits emotion.

While each project is different, George believes her clients come to her for her bright colours. “I always put forward a few different directions, but I can only really be as wild as the client allows me to be. As I gain a higher profile, clients are now asking for a ‘George Rose’ style – which, of course, I am happy to oblige.

“All the best clients allow the artist to be the artist,” agrees Eddie “the colour is often integral to the artist’s DNA.”

“I also have a reputation for working hard, which I think enhances trust with my clients,” adds George.

When asked about her favourite project to date, George found it hard to single one out. “Every wall feels like my baby! As for 2020 though, I actually loved how my Home festival mural turned out. I enjoy painting at festivals, and due to the pandemic, the event went viral and I ended up live streaming a lot of the process.



opposite above: George's mural, 'The Year of the Rat', graces the side of the Grand Hyatt and is painted in Resene Lumbersider tinted to Resene Adrenalin, Resene California, Resene Paua, Resene Pursuit and Resene Turbo. Image by Holly Hawkins.

opposite below: Footlocker approached George to create a bespoke mural for their Melbourne store – their largest in the Southern Hemisphere. The mandatory requirement was to use the brand colours – red and black. The mural features abstract brushstrokes interwoven with shapes of the patterns used to create sneakers – the hero product of the brand. George used Resene Lumbersider tinted to Resene Black, Resene Shuttle Grey and a custom made red. Image by Holly Hawkins.



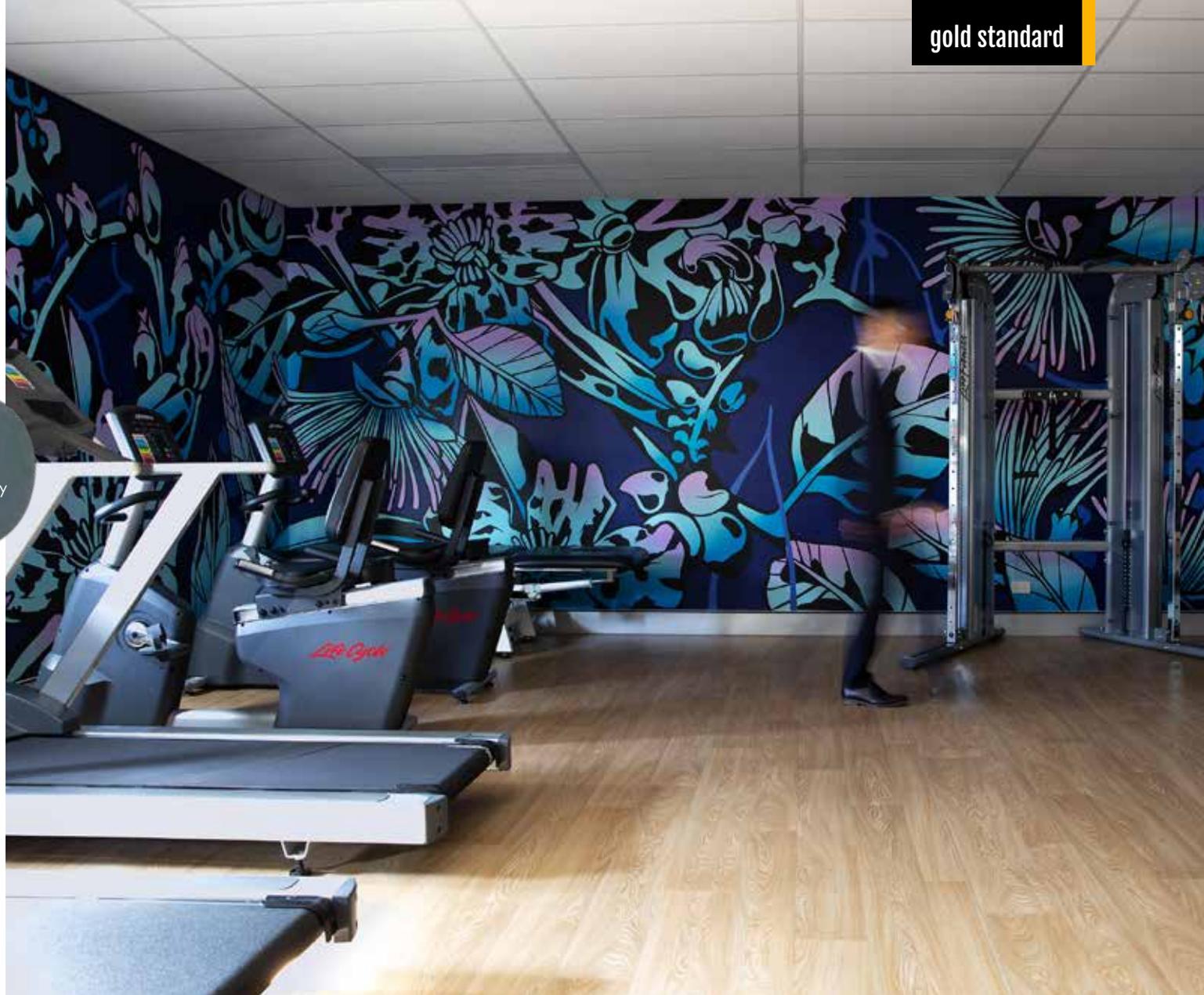
"I am also fond of the massive install I did at the Can't Do Tomorrow Urban Arts Festival in which I painted every imaginable space in the talk auditorium," she says.

"This year, the pandemic has actually seen me stay in one place for the longest time in my adult life. Before now, I would average two to four weeks in one location for years, bouncing around from project to project then coming home before heading off again. As such, I've been creating in the studio and drawing upon my collection of Resene paints. I really miss painting murals and am longing to get back into the big projects," she says.

However, George has a few exciting things in the hopper – including being selected by TikTok to paint their new Australian head office. "I have painted for social media platforms before like Instagram, but this seems like the type of ambitious job that I can't wait to sink my teeth into.

"I am also not far from releasing my printed portfolio to prospective clients, which has taken over a year to collate." *BW*

www.instagram.com/george_rose
www.instagram.com/eddiezammit



above: George's incredible mural 'Healing Vision' wraps the inside of the University of Canberra's rehabilitation centre. It features Resene Anise, Resene Black, Resene Calypso, Resene Curious Blue, Resene Dancing Girl, Resene Gold Drop, Resene Governor Bay, Resene Paua, Resene Riptide and Resene Shakespeare, all tinted into Resene Lumbersider. Image by Shannyn Higgins, www.shannynhiggins.com.