



for the love of art

Karen Beckett Muralist

Self-expression isn't enough for muralist Karen Beckett – she also enjoys helping others discover the artist within.

Ever since she was a child drawing on her mum's wallpaper, Karen has loved art. And, with a mother keen on photography and painting, and a father who was a renowned Maori bone carver, it runs in her blood.

Karen's first artistic commission came at age 17, when she supervised a group of young people painting murals around Palmerston North. Since then, she's shared her enthusiasm with everyone from school children to rest home residents. One reluctant 95-year-old proved age is no boundary to artistic talent – within half an hour Karen had her painting and loving it.

"Everyone has artistic ability, it's just a matter of bringing it out," she says. "I get such pleasure from seeing the pride and self-esteem that grows in kids when they get to enjoy art."

Community-based projects are an important aspect of Karen's work. She teaches mural painting at her stall at the Frankton market and will donate the finished mural back to the community. She also recently did a brightly painted Dr Seuss mural for the kids' corner of a new community building project in Hamilton.

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While she also enjoys screen printing, pottery, stained glass, wearable art, oil painting, tapestry and cooking, it's the public nature of murals that really fires her.

"It reaches more people," she says. "I have the ability to teach people and get them involved. If someone walked by while I was doing a mural and showed interest, I'd get them to start working on it, too."

Bold native scenes characterise her work, which has a strong environmental slant, and she uses a diverse range of canvases from boards, walls and fences to fridges, buses and her car.

She has also had a 25-year association with Resene.

"I really like the selection of colours Resene has and the paint is easy to use on walls. Before I had a car, I'd put their testpots in my backpack and walk or bike to my next job."

However, while she'd love to be a full-time muralist, financially it's not possible at the moment.

"Actually, money doesn't really come into it – I just love doing it!" **H**

View murals from around New Zealand on the Resene website – www.resene.co.nz/murals/gallery.htm.

mural tips

Creating great murals often comes down to a blend of a number of techniques – although the most important factor, of course, is your own imagination. What are some tips to consider?

- > Draw a couple of sketches and rough drafts before you start painting, to make sure you get the result you're after.
 - > Make sure the space you're painting is an appropriate size for your mural – if it's too big, your picture will look lost.
 - > Buy quality brushes and make sure your surface is clean and sound.
 - > Make sure the base colour of the surface you're painting is suitable for the picture you want to create. For example, for a sky or water mural, blue is ideal.
 - > Most murals work best with a satin sheen, such as Resene Lumbersider paint. Too much reflection can detract from your image.
 - > If you're going to seal your mural, use a brush and start in a corner using cross-hatch strokes. Allow your sealer to dry overnight.
 - > If you intend on moving and want to take your mural with you, it's a good idea to paint it on a canvas attached to the wall with glue or wallpaper paste.
 - > Start with the background and paint the elements closest to you last.
- See the Resene Mural Masterpieces Brochure for more ideas.