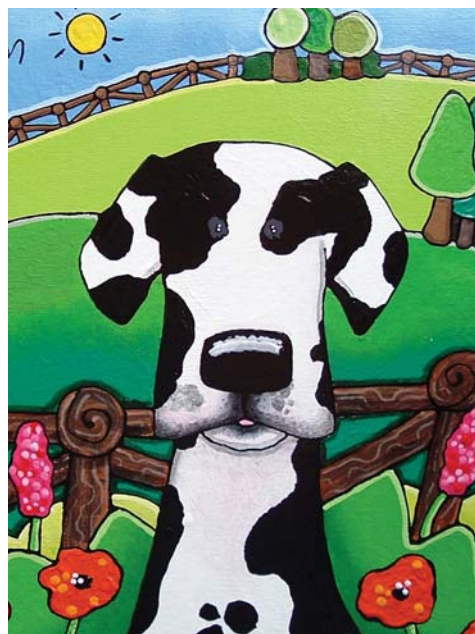


Keely Willoughby

An interview with an Australian Artist

Keely Willoughby is an artist based in Portland, Oregon. She was born in the UK and at four years old her family moved to Adelaide. With a strong passion for art, Keely completed her fine Art Studies at North Adelaide School of Art. She then went on to study graphic design and advertising at Croydon TAFE. An online love match saw Keely make the decision to move to the US.

Keely's art is whimsical, folksy and naïve, featuring happy cats and content canines. We caught up with Keely early in the new year as we wanted to find out more about her art and influences.



How did you originally get into painting pets?

I have always loved painting animals. I did work for the Adelaide Zoo back in the late 90s painting around 50 banners of different Zoo animals. The funny thing was most of them got stolen so that was quite flattering. My first animal character I ever did was Magnus the Rooster, he is still quite popular to this day. Painting pets and animals just evolved and I have never really enjoyed painting anything else.

What materials do you mainly use?

I mainly use acrylics on watercolour paper or canvas. I also use Gouache too, but I think that's mainly because I can't get the graphic design background to completely leave me.

I do use fabric paint (3-D Paint) and jewels also to decorate around the edge of the border sometimes. I think it can add to the whimsy of the piece and people really love them.

Does your art keep you gainfully employed or do you have a 'day job'?

Yes my art does keep me gainfully employed though I have recently applied for a full-time job. As long as I get a couple of days a week to get into my studio I'm happy. I usually take October-December off as I get commission requests (around seven a day) and a full-time job just wouldn't work at that time of year. Mostly these commissions are gifts for Christmas-people want something unique and personalised. The main reason for me to take a full time job this year is that I want to get back to Australia at the end of December or January in 2006/07. It'll mean that my boyfriend will finally get to meet the family.

We understand you mainly do commissions, do people need to send you detailed descriptions?

I do commissions and my prices vary from \$20.00 to \$200.00 depending on the size of the canvas. I try to keep my prices down as I have always believed everyone deserves the right to some funky cool art of their very precious pets. Usually people will contact me through my website via email and request a price list and other information. Then they send me photos of their pet(s) I request a front on view and a side view. It's really important for me to see if the animal has any particular markings that are personal to it.

Sometimes I can add a story to the border of a painting if people request it and I also read their descriptions of their animals especially if they want a particular background etc to be added. I do commissions for people all over the world and have done many of my fellow-country-pets. I recently sent work off to Iceland and the Netherlands so no country is too far. I usually can turn paintings around within a couple of weeks and have researched the most reliable and cost effective shipping methods.

What are your favourite subjects? We're picking dogs as they feature heavily in your art.

I do love to paint dogs though I don't own one. I started out painting mutts (and still do paint them) but I find myself painting the hard to find breeds that don't usually get featured on eBay (I sell a great deal of my art on the auction site). I have a big love for Border Collies, they're my favourite breed to paint and I also love to paint Kerry Blue Terriers and Bernese Mountain Dogs. I have just started to paint cats in my style also and they were super popular this Christmas-it was great to branch out moggy world.

We know you don't actually have a dog but do you have any pets at all?



