



A SPLASH OF COLOR

Artist Annette Spinks fills her world with color.

Sometimes you can see an artist in their paintings. Not in a literal way... there's no social media 'selfie' expression here with Annette Spinks' choppy blonde hair, or her sea-blue eyes rising from the abstract streaks of her modern art. But you can feel her energy, her optimism, her love of the great outdoors in those big bold hues splashed across the canvas. And you can't help but be pulled into her work, as if those daring lines and textures are reaching out and drawing you into the chaotic beauty of her mid-life sea-change.

At 44, she's a mother of five, four boys aged from 9 to 18... and then there's a little ray of pink – Kiarra, almost two, who bounced into their lives after a camping trip to Wilson's Prom.

Her art journey began 12 years ago when her step-father bought her pencils for Christmas, but the interest was pushed to one side while she was busy raising four boys. "My life was hectic and the painting got shelved, but I always knew I'd come back to it." After moving to Inverloch she threw herself into her art, and has been painting professionally for the last five years. "I need a three- or four-hour session to get started and get into it and and go for it. There's no point coming into the studio and dithering for an hour: that's not me. I need to be consumed."

The family recently moved from a 52-acre bush property in Belgrave South, on the outskirts of the Dandenong Ranges, to their summer holiday spot of Inverloch, where Annette has joined a soccer team and is learning to surf. "My first love was always the ocean, so it was my dream to live near the sea. I grew up in southern Tasmania and a lot of my childhood years were spent on the beach, rummaging in rock pools, swimming no matter how cold it was. As a kid, I didn't realise how special the place was."

At 15, Annette won a scholarship with Kodak, and spent time in Michigan, but things were very different when she got back. Her parents, who were married at 16, and had three children by the time they were 19, had split. "It really changed my life. I got back and found Tassie was a bit small and quiet, so I moved up to Queensland, and then I eventually found Melbourne. I've led a full, exciting and crazy life and even though my work is abstract, there's meaning and emotion in there – love and energy. It's not just somebody throwing paint around."

Her studio is also her gallery – a giant Colorbond shed in the Dixon Street industrial estate. An ugly khaki green from the outside, but walk inside and it's an explosion of colour: >





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wall-to-wall bright splashes and sparks layered in resin, capturing the fluid beauty in nature. The joy of the work is infectious, radiating sunshine yellow, the romance of finely sprinkled rain, and resin layers on swirling blue and green that look like the glassy depths of the ocean.

Annette came to abstract by accident. She'd been focusing on finely detailed sketches, forcing herself to be careful and intricate.

"As school, they put some things on the table for us to sketch and I started smudging with the charcoal and my teacher said, 'You're an abstract artist.' And I just let out this huge breath."

From that realisation that abstract was her true calling, Annette began to develop her style as an artist. "This is me: the unleashing of the paint onto the canvas. I love the freedom and joy of it."

Annette loves layering her art with resin, a process that can take several months to complete. Once she mixes the two parts, she has only 20 minutes to pour the resin before it hardens. Each layer then has to dry, so with three or four layers it can take weeks.

Since her children were babies, Annette and her family have snorkelled The Great Barrier Reef each year, and she's captured this in her series Into The Blue. When you gaze into the waves of those

paintings, you can feel the movement and depth of the ocean – a living energy brought to life in mixed media.

In her Melbourne Rain Series, which has almost sold out, Annette tried to capture her love and respect for rain, rather than the depression often associated with a downpour. "I was trying to play with the colours and the reflections in the rain, and behind the rain, rather than the dreary grey."

For her photo shoot with Coast, Annette asked if we could capture the movement of the paint – a vibrant flamingo pink thrown mid-air from a ladder onto black. "It's about who I am and about the way I paint. Watching the paint fall before it hits the canvas is quite amazing."

It might not look like it, but there's meticulous planning before that final dramatic act – creating the perfect colour, sizing up the canvas, the composition of the liquid fall. When Annette describes it, she's like a young child in a lolly shop, eyes wide, overwhelmed and overjoyed by the prospect.

"I'm loving this. I'm doing my own thing. My paintings are selling. I go to bed at night and I just see colours, ideas. Some people never find their passion. I might have been past 40, but I'm lucky I found mine." 

