

Whimsical Women



Emerging artist Kelly Coates creates delicate female figures in watercolour and mixed media, working under the name Mekel.

Kelly Coates is a 31 year old Illustrator from Perth, Western Australia, who grew up knowing that she loved to draw. In her early school days her career goals vacillated between owning a Mr Whippy selling ice cream on the beach and being a fashion designer.

A little more schooling and Kelly discovered that she hated sewing, and really just wanted to draw girls in pretty dresses.

Despite the starving artist image, Kelly's mother was supportive of her following her passions, but she

was also conscious of the need to have a direction and a profession in mind. Kelly went on to study a three year Advanced Diploma in Graphic Design and Multimedia at the Western Australian School of Art and Design, graduating in 2000, and works now as a professional



Designer for the Department of Education. Her work has been quite varied, stretching her design skills outside of her chosen themes. She has illustrated children's education books, drawing cute characters with bright primary colours and her current work project is more corporate oriented as she is designing an eLearning website. As part of this role Kelly designs the overall look, layout and colour scheme, and all the graphics for a fully online environment. She feels fortunate that her skills in illustration are utilised as part of her work, and she uses them whenever she can.

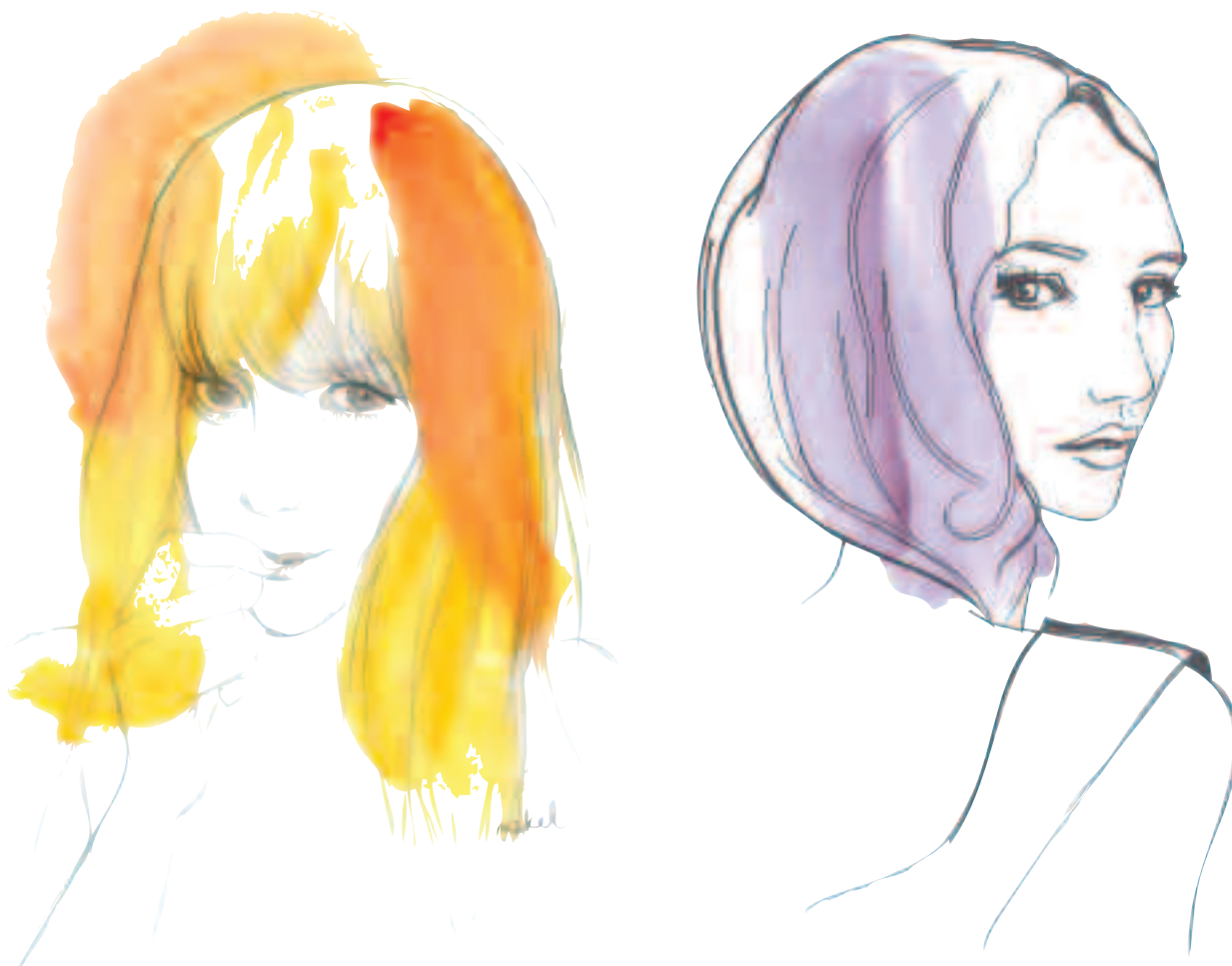
Kelly's personal work is heavily influenced by her continuing interest in fashion. Her focus is on sketching girls. The girls are pretty, with flowing

hair and draped fabrics. She adds a splash of watercolour to engage the eye and she likes to outline with a runny black gel pen, or her trusty Pacer pencil. 'Inspiration can strike anywhere', says Kelly; '...so I find I can be quickly creative with my sketch pad, and occasionally I enjoy getting on the computer and finishing my creations digitally.'

Her main source of inspiration is fashion. 'I love all the beautiful colours, the girls sashaying down the runway with their beautiful

dresses, or modern and vintage photography,' elucidates Kelly '...but in my real life, even something as simple as the sunlight hitting a building, or the colours at dusk can provide a moment of inspiration. I like to sometimes just do a splash of random watercolour and then use this to trigger my imagination for a piece.'

A creature of the modern world Kelly also trawls the Internet for inspiration. 'I'm particularly addicted to Pinterest at the moment,' she



declares, '...as it is a daily source of inspiration from artists and photographers I admire. I often can't draw fast enough for all the ideas that it gives me.'

The result is delicately created whimsical images of women that imbue a sense of calm on the viewer. Simple strokes and neutral colouring somehow evoke a picture of old style sepia coloured photographs, despite the tendrils of light colour that add impact to the feminine motif of the work. 'I tend to be attracted to neutral shades but with the pop of a few bright colours. My favourite colours change daily and I could never pick one,' exclaims Kelly. Conversely, despite drawing a number of brunettes, she sometimes finds it difficult to incorporate brown.

She tends to focus on the female form, finding it intrinsically more aesthetically pleasing. 'I think that you can objectively step back from sexuality and appreciate female beauty', says Kelly. It may be this quality that lends an innocence to her work. 'Perhaps I'm always drawing the girl I wish I was, or aspire to be.'

'I just loved to draw, and create pretty pictures' explains Kelly. 'I always had the creative bug from a young age and I chose to study graphic design rather than just fine art, to broaden the fields that I could work in.' This may be her mother's practical instincts chiming in. Although her main passion has always been illustration, she also has an interest in design in general, for the combinations of colour,

layout and beautiful typography. 'My grandfather was reasonably successful as an artist, although he did more Australian landscapes in oils. I wish I had the opportunity to teach him about art using digital mediums and the options we have today with technology', says Kelly wistfully.

You can view and purchase Kelly's work through the website: www.mekel.net

TOP LEFT TO RIGHT
Faye, Alesha, Tasuku, Lavender