



Far left: Maria Owens with *Maybe Tomorrow*. Left, from top: A painting in progress, work buddy Rosie, and favourite Resene colours.

Calm in the chaos

West Auckland artist Maria Owens tunes out the noise with her colourful abstract paintings.

Having turned to painting during turbulent pandemic times, Maria Owens has now found a lifetime passion in her bold, gestural artwork. It took three pushes from the universe to convince her to pursue painting, despite having a natural flair for art since childhood.

“The first drive was that I wanted to encourage my daughter Sofia to keep on drawing, and I thought that if I did some painting and had the stuff out, she would be interested. The second was that we bought a bach and I was looking for things to buy to put on the walls, but all the art that I liked was so expensive. And then the last reason was that I wanted something that could keep me away from social media, because during Covid, I was so

worried about my family in Denmark that I kept checking my phone.”

Maria’s intuition was right. During her first painting session, two hours flew by and her mind didn’t wander once. Since the pandemic, she has refined her expressive style and pinpointed which materials align with her sustainability principles, eventually settling with Resene paint.

“I saw the Trees That Count initiative that Resene does, planting trees to minimise the impact on nature, and then the Resene PaintWise programme which re-uses and responsibly disposes of paint, and it just made me feel better about using acrylics.”

Another green tip from Maria is to wipe the

excess paint off brushes onto an old item of clothing, minimising the amount of paint that will be washed down the drain – any fabric that is unwearable and too shabby to be donated to an op shop will work.

Greens, browns and pinks are Maria’s go-to colours, including the kauri-reminiscent shade Resene Awol or the cinnamon Resene Barnstorm. Not afraid of mixing hues, Maria employs the vivid colours of Resene testpots mixed with neutral shades from larger Resene pots.

“I put them in a container and give them a good stir. It will last for a really long time. I don’t worry about the amount of paint – I can always splash it on and then say, okay, I don’t like it. It just gives you so much freedom.”

A closer look at Maria’s paintings reveals they often have five or more layers of paint. In typical tortured-artist fashion, Maria experiences the highs and lows of revisiting a painting until it feels right. “I go through this painting process, which, you know, I think every painter probably does, where in the beginning I’m like, ‘Oh, wow, I love this. I’m awesome. This is so cool.’ And then the next day, I come down and think, ‘Oh, my God, I don’t know what I’m doing, and I just feel totally down.’”

Currently, Maria is working at an art studio at the Newmarket train station with two other artists. Her border terrier, Rosie, enjoys guarding the window from passer-by pooches.

“It’s so nice to have a space to paint in, because then I don’t start thinking about doing a vacuum clean or putting on a wash – you know, all the things that happen when we’re home.”

Check out Maria’s art at the 250 Gallery in Ponsonby (20 September–8 October), Open Studios Waitakere (18–19 November), and at Railway Street Gallery + Studios. mariaowensart.com



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