

# careers in art

For many students the prospect of a career in art and design comes with uncertainty... where can 'art' take me? Each year Zart interviews a group of creative professionals from different backgrounds with varying experiences, to explore the realities of the issue - "How do I turn my creative passion into a career?" Your students also may enjoy reading these interviews to shed some light on their own career paths.

## Renee Rawlinson Graduate Art Teacher, Banyule Primary School

### When you were little what did you want to become?

At Kinder: A fairy

Primary School: A nurse

High School: A fashion designer

### What did you study at school and university?

VCE: Art, Studio Arts, Hospitality, Dance.

University: Bachelor of Primary Education at RMIT, Bundoora.

### What attracted you to a career in teaching?

My grade 5 teacher: Miss Bond, who always made learning fun and hands-on!

My VCE Studio Arts teacher: Mrs Novak, who inspired me to do my best and to pursue a career in Art Education.

### Any career highlights?

During university: I was awarded with The Golden Key - which meant I was in the top 15% of all RMIT students for 2008. This was pretty cool and unexpected.

Doing a month's placement in The Northern Territory (North East Arnhem Land) on Elcho Island, which was an amazing experience and something I would love to do again. I learnt so much about myself and it reminded me how much I love teaching.

This year: Getting the keys to my own classroom, setting up my art room and realising I am a 'real' teacher.

### What's your favourite piece of art work?

I love Pop Art: anything by Andy Warhol, Claes Oldenburg and Roy Lichtenstein. This was one of my favourite studies during high school. The other was: Frida Kahlo. I love her use of colour and expression. *The Two Fridas* is my favourite.

### What period in art history inspires you the most?

Modern and contemporary - I feel Art Nouveau/Art Deco, Surrealism, Pop Art, and Graffiti/Street Art most inspire me.

### What book are you reading right now?

*The Five People You Meet in Heaven* by Mitch Albom.

### What do you do to unwind?

Go out for Sushi and Miso soup: I love Japanese food.

Go see a band or go to a gig. I love live music.

Shopping for movies and music! I also love Op Shopping!

### What is your favourite medium to work with?

Textiles or Photography.

### What are some of the negative aspects of your job?

Cleaning up! I find it takes so much longer to clean up than I expected - especially clay.

Report writing for the first time, I'm sure I'll get better at it next time round!

Sometimes, juggling two specialists - I also teach Cultural Studies (Prep - 6), so double planning and double reports.

### What is something you would love to do that you haven't already done?

Travel overseas. I have never left Australia. I would love to go to Japan, Germany and Egypt!

### Where do you get most of your inspiration?

From Music, movies and popular culture/fashion.

My friends, family and the children/school.

NGV, Zart and ACMI.

### What is your favourite piece of clothing in your wardrobe?

My Carrie Bradshaw Sex and the City inspired - Year 12 Graduation dress.

Or my pink \$5 50's prom-style dress from Savers!

### Who would you most like to sit next to on a flight to Europe?

That's tough: Frida Kahlo, Audrey Hepburn or Patience Hodgson from The Grates.



### If you were speaking to a secondary school student who was showing interest in following in your footsteps, what advice would you give them?

Give it a go. You'll be amazed at how much you can learn about yourself.

Take on the challenge of a specialist (or two!) It's so much fun.

Be passionate about what you do. The kids will pick up on it and it's exciting when they enjoy what they are doing as much as you are.

Teach around Australia! Do a placement or a teaching block in The Northern Territory.

And remember; teaching can take you overseas!!!

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# Lou Chamberlin Visual Art Teacher Star of the Sea, College Gardenvale

### When you were little what did you want to become?

Art always featured strongly, so something to do with the visual arts.

### What did you study at school and university?

Yep, you guessed it – Art. I was so keen that I had to study it by correspondence because it wasn't offered at the school I attended.

### What attracted you to a career in teaching?

There weren't a lot of choices "back then". My mother was a nurse and, as is so often the case, I couldn't stand the sight of blood, so a career in nursing was out of the question. I couldn't type, so I couldn't become a secretary and didn't want to join the public service. That left teaching. Not that I minded that option, but if there had then been the choices available even five years later, I would have enjoyed a career as an archaeologist. In my twenties I worked on a number of sites in Australia, Europe and the Middle East and loved the recording and drafting of finds. By then I was loving teaching and the stimulation of working with young people.

### Any career highlights?

Being awarded a Churchill Fellowship was a highlight. It allowed me to travel to study something I felt passionate about – Puppetry – and it gave me the self-assurance to extend myself more confidently in a public forum.

### What's your favourite piece of art work?

Without a doubt my favourite art work is *Guernica*. The raw emotion of Picasso's anti-war statement never fails to move me. That's part of the genius of the man.

### What period in art history inspires you the most?

I feel most energised and 'at home' when I'm surrounded by the middle ages. For that reason I love visiting Europe and the small villages where I feel as though I'm breathing the same air as the people of the 13th and 14th centuries. The winding streets often contain glorious surprises when you least expect them.

### What book are you reading right now?

*The Boy in Striped Pajamas* by John Boyne and *Dear Fatty* by Dawn French.

### What do you do to unwind?

Travel is always my first choice, followed closely by losing myself in a book.

### What is your favourite medium to work with?

I enjoy working in dry media, especially dry pastels, but always travel with my watercolour kit.

### What are some of the negative aspects of your job?

The part of the job I enjoy most is the excitement and stimulation of developing new directions and activities, so the answer to that question would be the eternal paperwork that has to be done at the expense of the creativity that nourishes me both within and outside the classroom.

### What is something you would love to do that you haven't already done?

Travel features here, too. There are many places still on my list to visit. The Silk Road is near the top, up there with Eastern Europe. I'm looking forward to visiting the Kimberley next month.

### Where do you get most of your inspiration?

I am always inspired by the diversity of world culture and life in other environments; often the humble rather than the exuberant.

### What is your favourite piece of clothing in your wardrobe?

I have a favourite tunic/vest made by Chez in Glenferrie Rd. I can wear it with anything and it always looks good.

### Who would you most like to sit next to on a flight to Europe?

Dawn French – she makes me belly laugh.

### If you were speaking to a secondary school student who was showing interest in following in your footsteps, what advice would you give them?

Immerse yourself in the visual world; its people, its culture and architecture, and above all, its art, both exuberant and humble.

# Anna Stewart Visual Communication Teacher Mackillop College, Swan Hill

### When you were little what did you want to become?

An Art Teacher or a Missionary!

### What did you study at school and university?

My focus at school was Art and Music. At University I studied Textiles and Visual Art amongst other fields.

### What attracted you to a career in teaching?

A love of learning. Being able to utilize my skills across a variety of disciplines. Working with people was also important to me.

### Any career highlights?

The fantastic students and staff I've worked with at different schools who have made the job worthwhile. Also teaching accelerated art students and Religious Art as a subject.

### What's your favourite piece of art work?

A fresco by Fra Angelico [c.1387–1455] called *The Transfiguration*.

### What period in art history inspires you the most?

Two periods in particular; The Renaissance for all the artistic discovery and Australian Impressionism for the application of paint on canvas.

### What book are you reading right now?

*Refuse to Choose; What do I do When I want to do Everything?* by Barbara Sheer.

### What do you do to unwind?

Painting, gardening, yoga and meditation.

### What is your favourite medium to work with?

Oil paint without a doubt.

### What are some of the negative aspects of your job?

Time constraints, increasing class sizes, the low status of the Arts in many schools.

### What is something you would love to do that you haven't already done?

There are so many...to learn the cello, fly an aeroplane, a Vipassana meditation retreat to name a few.

### Where do you get most of your inspiration?

Observation, the Australian landscape, experimentation, quiet thinking spaces.

### What is your favourite piece of clothing in your wardrobe?

It varies depending on the weather.

### Who would you most like to sit next to on a flight to Europe?

Someone intelligent or humorous such as Oliver Sacks, Phillip Adams or The Dalai Lama.

### If you were speaking to a secondary school student who was showing interest in following in your footsteps, what advice would you give them?

To pursue their goal most definitely. However, I would want them to understand that teaching is more of a vocation and not just an occupation.

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[www.zartart.com.au](http://www.zartart.com.au)



## Chris Wood Textile Teacher, St Ignatius College, Geelong

**When you were little what did you want to become?**

A Fashion Illustrator.

**What did you study at school and university?**

Year 11 & 12 Art at school. I completed the 4 year Bachelor of Education [Art & Craft] course at Melbourne State College. In the first 2 years we studied a range of art and craft subjects. In the final 2 years I majored in Fine Art, Painting, Textiles, Photography and Woodwork. Woodwork was my major area of study in my final year.

**What attracted you to a career in teaching?**

I worked in a bank for seven years and was totally bored with the work I was doing. Throughout that time I was always involved in the arts where I did night courses and part time studies. I decided to give up my day job and return to full time study and was so glad I did. I loved every minute of the 4 years at Melbourne State College. It opened my eyes to areas of the Arts I

had never been exposed to. When I finished my course I could think of nothing better than spending every day making some kind of art work and sharing this experience with kids. Teaching allows me to do this.

**Any career highlights?**

A study tour to China in 1996.

**What's your favourite piece of art work?**

I would love to own a Brett Whiteley painting.

**What period in art history inspires you the most?**

Ancient Egypt.

**What book are you reading right now?**

Postcards by Annie Proulx.

**What do you do to unwind?**

Watch movies, read and listen to music.

**What is your favourite medium to work with?**

Silk dyes and watercolour paint.

**What are some of the negative aspects of your job?**

Writing reports.

**What is something you would love to do that you haven't already done?**

Go to Egypt.

**Where do you get most of your inspiration?**

From whatever is happening around me. At the moment I find the street art scene that is evolving and the artist run spaces that are nothing like traditional galleries are really exciting and inspirational.

**What is your favourite piece of clothing in your wardrobe?**

A long black silk jacket from Vietnam.

**Who would you most like to sit next to on a flight to Europe?**

Yoko Ono.

## Maria Germano Visual Arts Teacher, Baringa School, Moe



**When you were little what did you want to become?**

I can't recall really wanting to be anything except for a Primary School Teacher. It wasn't a big focus for me. When I was little, I think I just loved playing really. I used my imagination a lot to build, make and create, and as I grew up on a farm there was plenty of things to do and lots of space to let my imagination run wild. I also spent a lot of time drawing with my siblings and sewing with my mum, making sure my Barbie had clothes on!

While I was in year 11 I went to Italy for the first time on a family holiday. It was the most invaluable trip and it changed my life forever. I fell totally in love with art, architecture, travel and everything Italian. This is when I knew I wanted to do something involving the arts. My mother encouraged us to study. She had always wanted to be a teacher.

**What did you study at school and university?**

After going to Mirboo North High

School for my secondary years, I went to Yallourn TAFE and studied Applied Art in Year 12. It was the best start for a career in the arts and it helped me to prepare my Art Folio for entrance into University. I went to Melbourne University and studied Bachelor of Education (Art/Craft) and majored in Textiles and Art History. This is when I fell in love with Textiles. In 2008 I completed my Masters of Education (Special Education and Early Intervention). I also have Certificate 4 in Therapeutic Massage (but that's a secret!)

**What attracted you to a career in teaching?**

After finishing University I realised that I really didn't want to teach in a mainstream school. When I took on emergency teaching it was only because it was an emergency to have some money. Fifteen years went by then I began teaching in a school for intellectually disabled children. I eventually moved into the art room and I have been teaching art appreciation, textiles, glassworks, jewellery making, sculpture, mosaics and my classes have been involved in painting bollards and murals for the community. It has been stimulating, challenging and satisfying. I love the school I work in and my colleagues are a very special people.

I always thought that I would like to work with adults or in an alternative setting. Teaching in a special school has given me this opportunity and has developed my understanding of teaching to a deeper level. I really had to teach myself to teach in this environment. I teach step by step and this has taken me the last couple of years to perfect. Teaching is like acting, you have to act in a role and be a role model all the time without the glamour!

**Any career highlights?**

I suppose finishing my Masters in Education while working full-time in 2008 was a great highlight. Generally on a day to day basis it's when I see the children learn. When you witness "the penny dropping" especially for those that find it difficult to learn it's a great joy and celebration of learning. This is when I know all of the hard work is worth it. It shows you that you are making a difference in their lives. The achievements of the students and the self esteem they build through the arts are astonishing.

**What's your favourite piece of art work?**

Favourite!!! There are too many to choose from that are exciting and inspiring to have a favourite. I can give



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my list. I really loved Dali's works and I went to his gallery in Spain, in France, I went to Marc Chagall's Gallery, his gallery was so tranquil. I love Gauguin's French Polynesian works because I love tropical, the colours, shapes, and flatness in his works. The metallics and design in *The Kiss*, by Gustav Klimt is a reflection of my inspiration for textiles and painting. And Picasso's work is also on the list. I will also remember the Mark Rothko that was in the house where I was an Au Pair in Italy. It was a big blue painting, and I would just sit in front of it and become submerged in colour, I just didn't get why he painted like this at the time but that was actually it!

## What period in art history inspires you the most?

This may be abstract art as my work is abstract if I had to explain it. Being a visual person I just get images in my mind of what I have to paint or create. I don't mean to base my work on any period it comes from the inside!

Since I've been teaching I can look at art and really appreciate what I see, I also look at art and decipher it. When I am inspired, I try and look for how I can use it in a class and help my students become aware of art and artist. It is difficult to teach students whole periods of art in Special Education. So I teach with a theme, e.g. landscapes, portraits, water, leaves, sunflowers etc and then explore artist's, such as Picasso, Van Gogh, Klimt, Drysdale, etc. and their art works, such as *Weeping Woman*, *Sunflowers*, then the periods, such as Cubism, Impressionism, Abstract art etc. and use art language so they extend their whole understanding of art. Then we explore mediums and techniques such as pencil, graphic pens, oil pastel, charcoal, Indian inks to produce works. I also spend time at the end of every class for students to observe and evaluate their own and others' work. This is how I create my programs.

## What book are you reading right now?

Right now on the bedside table are 2 books, *The Power of Now* and *The New Earth* by Eckhart Tolle, rather spiritual! On the coffee table is *Italian Joy*, By Carla Coulson, which is beautiful. I read snippets of them when I get a minute.

## What do you do to unwind?

I use different ways to maintain my sanity and unwind. I have been practicing Yoga once a week for about fifteen years now and I use a lot of techniques to help me survive, This is

my favourite way to relax. I generally have a massage and exercise to de-stress such as dog walking, swim or treadmill. On my holidays I love going to the beach to unwind and I try to go to Queensland on my breaks. To balance and recharge it's generally time with my partner and family. I need to cook to feel balanced it's just an Italian thing to cook, and after growing up around my Mum and Nonna and being involved in my brothers cafe on the Gold Coast, I just can't help to serve up a fare or something special. Just ask about my sticky date puddings!

## What is your favourite medium to work with?

When I get a chance to paint I love to work with impasto and metallic acrylics, I use sponges to apply the impasto and apply layers of paint and muslin to rub back areas of the paint. Spectacles of colour appear on the canvas. I generally apply at least ten coats of paint and work backwards. I love how the paint gets caught in the impasto's texture and creates dark and light. At work, I really enjoy everything about textiles, this is where I get a chance to be me!

## What are some of the negative aspects of your job?

The biggest problem in schools today is discipline. I can't stand wasting good time on discipline. Teenagers just love to test the boundaries. It is very different in Special Education though, as unaddressed behaviours can make or break your day. I put in a lot of effort building understanding relationships with students. Unfortunately sometimes you can't fix something that is totally broken. At school we all endeavour with this frustration but try to provide a sound, stable, fair environment for students to grow in.

## What is something you would love to do that you haven't already done?

There are a couple of things that I would love to do sometime. Well, even though I've been to Italy three times, it's to go to the Cappella Sistina. (The Sistine Chapel) And I also have a burning desire to go to Peru. That's the only country I really have left of my list to do. Oh and go back to Egypt just to see the New Cairo Museum.

## Where do you get most of your inspiration?

On a personal basis, I get inspiration from magazines. I just love magazines. This is something that I collect and I have Vogues from 20 years ago. I also use photography as inspiration. I like it because it's faster than painting. It's

instant and I get immediate satisfaction from photography. I also tend to be easily inspired by nature; the colours in the sunsets are something I look forward to every day!

On a day to day, my inspiration comes from the students and their work, it's so exciting! develop their skills, understanding of art, and build their self esteem. I like to give positive encouragement to bring out their best. After every class I will ask them to hang their work up on the board and we discuss their work. This inspires me to provide the students with information and scope to learn and develop as individuals.

## What is your favourite piece of clothing in your wardrobe?

It must be my gorgeous pink and charcoal Thai silk scarf. It's so soft and warm and light and no matter what I'm wearing I can't help choosing it every morning, above lots of others, even if it doesn't match!

## Who would you most like to sit next to on a flight to Europe?

In this instant I would take a middle seat so I have a choice of two people, I just can't settle at one! It would be Eva Longoria and Elvis (if he was here). No really now, because I love to travel. I would have to share my next experience to Europe with my partner, even though this would probably be an ordeal as he doesn't like flying!

## If you were speaking to a secondary student who was showing interest in following in your footsteps, what advice would you give them?

Firstly I would tell them to work hard and prepare themselves to be accepted into university. If they need to present an art folio do this professionally and show versatility within their skills. Show outstanding pieces of work. Develop skills to help them present themselves such as showing confidence, being prepared, having good communication and speaking professionally in interviews. Once they have been accepted into university, to follow the system and be organised, and they will survive the pressure of being young and wanting to enjoy life, and working hard to study to achieve great results. Also when doing school rounds apply for schools they really want to work in, in order to get to know the school and have a good chance of employment. Don't ever let go of their dreams even if some things in life get in their way. Always practise their art. Be involved in the community and get to know people in their field.

**Our Zart Extra Archives hold all of our previous editions of the Zart Extra dating back to 1995.**

**If you are looking for more careers in art - see our past editions for interviews of the following professionals:**



Pamela Irving

### Term 3 2004

**Pamela Irving** Ceramicist/Artist  
**Ruth Lovell** Gallery Curator  
**Monty Coles** Photographer  
**Cameron Brodie** Industrial Designer  
**Sally Darlison** Textile Artist



Carolyn Dunnell

### Term 3 2007

**Peter Schipperheyn** Sculptor  
**Michelle Appleton** Interior Designer & Decorator  
**Carolyn Dunnell** Furniture Designer & Maker  
**Virginia Cuppaidge** Painter



Natalie Lysenko

### Term 3 2008

**Leigh Hobbs** Painter/Illustrator/Sculptor/  
Writer  
**Natalie Lysenko** Architect  
**Jungula Kriss** Cultural Artist  
**Nicky Merkel** Visual Merchandiser  
**Suzanne Vial Lumina** Fibre Arts Gallery

These can be found on the Zart Art Website:  
[www.zartart.com.au/html/zartextra.html](http://www.zartart.com.au/html/zartextra.html)

