



# The stuff of legends

Inspired by mythology and symbolism, Justine McAllister uses Resene paint to capture the essence of our modern times.

Since prehistoric times, people have been painting on walls as a way of telling stories. Even in the most primitive of these examples, humans used pigment to create depictions and symbols that conveyed major events and important figures of their time while simultaneously beautifying the surfaces. Although our materials, methods and techniques for doing this have undoubtedly evolved throughout the ages, 64,000 years

later, murals and street art continue to be a necessary part of our social fabric. Whether line, colour and form are being used as a way of commenting on the current state of affairs, sharing opinions on politics or spreading awareness about key issues, the best works provide an eye-catching snapshot of what we value most – and they make you feel something.

For more than a decade, artist Justine McAllister has been telling stories through her

uniquely illustrative style of murals. Hailing from Ballarat, Victoria, Justine says that she was always a creative kid. “I wasn’t happy unless I was making something with my hands and I used to spend lots of time making crafty things with my mother and grandmother. Career-wise, I am a bit of a lone wolf in my family. While many members of my family pursued paths in medical or science fields, in my late teens,



**left and above:** Justine’s most recent work for JC’s Quality Foods was her second job for this client. In addition to a large mural on the side of the company’s warehouse, she also painted signage and a 125m long repeating design that snakes around the exterior of the offices. The design features Resene Lumbersider Low Sheen tinted to Resene Blaze, Resene Clotted Cream, Resene Di Serria, Resene Green White, Resene Kelp, Resene Norway, Resene Pioneer Red, Resene Provincial Pink, Resene Rich Gold, Resene Ravishing, Resene Rustic Red and Resene Tom Thumb. These hues were chosen in line with the client’s request for the colour palette to be comprised of a mix of earthy browns and nature-inspired greens with accents of vibrant colour to add contemporary flair.

	Resene Clotted Cream		Resene Di Serria
	Resene Provincial Pink		Resene Blaze
	Resene Green White		Resene Rich Gold
	Resene Norway		Resene Pioneer Red
	Resene Tom Thumb		Resene Ravishing
	Resene Kelp		Resene Rustic Red

right and below: Getting noticed can be a big challenge for brick-and-mortar retail shops, but Justine's mural for Wild Things can't be missed. Not only does the work provide visual cues to what potential customers can expect to find, she attractively incorporated the shop's name as part of her design – eliminating the need for her client to purchase and install supplemental traditional signage on top of it. The mural was created using Resene Lumbersider Low Sheen tinted to Resene Broom, Resene Di Serria, Resene Melting Moment, Resene Norway, Resene Outrageous, Resene Pioneer Red, Resene Hot Chile, Resene Rich Gold, Resene Sunshade, Resene Supernova, Resene Tom Thumb, Resene Vesuvius and Resene White.



### top tip

Images found online, in books, in magazines or photos you've taken can provide ample inspiration for creating colour palettes to use in your projects. Resene ColourMatch Online, [www.resene.com/colourmatchonline](http://www.resene.com/colourmatchonline), makes it easy for you to match colours you see to Resene colours. Simply upload your inspirational image to this free online colour-matching tool – or enter the image URL – and it will match your chosen colour in the image to a similar Resene paint colour. Or turn the entire image into a Resene colour palette using the free online Resene Colour Palette Generator, [www.resene.com/palettegenerator](http://www.resene.com/palettegenerator).



I recognised the viability of pursuing a life as an artist. Encouraged by my great high school art teacher, I moved to Melbourne and studied to receive a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Painting from the Victorian College of Arts (VCA)."

It was in her mid-20s that Justine was drawn to create artwork on a larger scale and she began painting murals in bars in Brunswick and Fitzroy – and her passion has never waned. "Persuading my husband and his business partners to allow me to paint a mural in their bar marked the beginning of my passion for painting walls, and from there, one opportunity led to the next," she recalls. "The murals evolved, growing both in size and complexity, fuelling my love for large-scale projects."

Ten years later, Justine has honed her ability to ask the right questions when meeting clients to discover the root of the story that needs to be told and extrapolating it into something beautiful to behold. "My approach involves quickly discerning their dislikes and identifying the overlapping preferences between what they appreciate in my past work and their desired outcome. Each new client interaction becomes an investigative process to understand if they are motivated by aesthetics, conceptual ideas or have a specific purpose in mind for the project. The digital design stage is a crucial step in ensuring both the client and I have full confidence in the proposed solution before moving on to the installation," she says.



For Justine, the most memorable mural projects have been the ones where she has been given carte blanche to express herself and bring her own ideas to life. In 2017, Justine reached a significant milestone when she was invited to create a mural that would grace one of Melbourne's Art Trams – but there are plenty of other projects that have been standouts. “I have been lucky enough to paint some great projects with Resene products. Some as of late include JC's Quality Foods, Mamawest, the Melbourne Markets in Epping, Melbourne Quarter x Authority Creative, The Motley Hotel, the Pullman Melbourne on Swanston, the Urban Canvas Mural Festival and the Wild Things food

store. What makes these projects truly special is the trust that was placed in me to exercise my creative freedom. Any opportunity where I can infuse my artistic expression into a project becomes a unique and rewarding experience.”

Justine says that each mural she undertakes presents its own set of unique challenges. “From navigating wall access and securing permits to managing traffic and working the graveyard shift, each endeavour brings distinct obstacles. Dealing with specialised equipment like elevated work platforms and coordinating with construction activities can also add complexity to the process. However, the most unpredictable factor is the weather – we are

entirely at its mercy, and the course of projects can be entirely dictated by the conditions outside. The ability to be flexible and effectively solve problems are great skills for muralists to develop,” she explains.

“Creating murals in public environments does bring a substantial amount of pressure to deliver high-calibre work,” she continues. “The vulnerability of exposing your mural process to the public is a unique aspect – especially when early sketch-up stages may not fully reflect the final vision, and the work might initially appear as a ‘hot mess’. Despite this, many muralists find solace in putting on headphones and immersing themselves in the job at hand. The dichotomy of some murals feeling more personal than others, based on the level of direction and influence on the project, is a common experience. For me, all of the creative process is determined digitally before installation. By the time I reach the physical wall, I'm simply a technician executing the digital vision into a tangible piece of painted art.”

Out of all the challenges that the mural painting process presents, Justine considers colour selection to be among the easiest to conquer. “Palette selection is something that comes more naturally to me. I hoard photos and digital colour swatches to create a library of colour combinations. These references are drawn from a variety of sources, including architecture, fashion fabrics, movie stills and nature. The task lies in pairing these palettes with the right project and client. I find I use Resene ColourMatch Online quite a bit to select and tweak my palettes,” she says.

Resene products have long been Justine's go-to medium. “I've found Resene Lumbersider Low Sheen to be the hands-down best paint for my murals. Its pigment load is unparalleled. Like many muralists, I'm drawn to a great pigment load and anything that can streamline the process when working on a large scale is a bonus as every coat counts.”

Beyond the colours and quality of the products themselves, the support she has

received from Resene has also been important to her work. “It's been outstanding for a trade paint company to champion muralists and artists the way Resene does. My Resene representative and the staff at my local Resene ColorShop have been so supportive of my projects and are always interested in what I'm working on next. It's also invaluable to be able to get advice for specialised projects. Every now and then I'm thrown a curve ball of painting on a surface I haven't before and getting tailored advice from the team makes my business run smoothly.”

Justine also uses Resene paints to create smaller scale works on canvas. This was something she found herself doing a lot more of during Melbourne's lockdowns. Last year, she presented her debut solo exhibition, *Lions & Tigers & Beards*, at KSR Gallery. While she believes her career so far has been more of a gradual ascent marked by persistent effort rather than a singular breakthrough moment, Justine recognises that this show was something special.

“Undoubtedly, my first solo exhibition stands out as the most personal and significant body of work in my artistic journey so far. After more than a decade of crafting commercial murals, this project marked a return to my fine art origins, creating self-driven work,” Justine says.

The title of the exhibition – inspired by Harold Arlen's song in *The Wizard of Oz* – served as a metaphor for the collective uncertainties, anxieties and inner turmoil experienced during the pandemic. Justine has observed that these themes seem to resonate cyclically throughout our lives as we react to both personal and global circumstances. As with many of her murals, mythological symbolism is also prevalent. “The meaning of a work can transform and be interpreted differently depending on the context of who is viewing a work at any given time,” says Justine. “That's why I love art so much; a piece can be relevant to many generations.”

Breaking free from pre-defined briefs to create the exhibition's body of work was both intimidating and liberating, she adds. “Within



**opposite and above:** Justine stands in front of her 300m<sup>2</sup> mural that wraps around the carpark at the Pullman Melbourne on Swanston, which includes 70 horses painted in Resene Lumbersider Low Sheen tinted to Resene Casablanca, Resene Cola, Resene Entourage, Resene Grain Brown, Resene Iko Iko, Resene Karry, Resene Lichen, Resene Masala, Resene Oasis, Resene Pursuit, Resene Half Rickshaw and Resene Zest. The design is a contemporary, Australian-influenced recreation of the horse and hound 'Tally Ho' upholstery that can be found on the hotel's armchairs in the club lounge.

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|--|----------------------|--|------------------|
|  | Resene Oasis         |  | Resene Zest      |
|  | Resene Karry         |  | Resene Pursuit   |
|  | Resene Grain Brown   |  | Resene Entourage |
|  | Resene Half Rickshaw |  | Resene Lichen    |
|  | Resene Iko Iko       |  | Resene Masala    |
|  | Resene Casablanca    |  | Resene Red Oxide |
|  |                      |  | Resene Cola      |

## top tip

Murals tend to deter graffiti, however, your clients may want to consider adding extra protection for murals and street art in graffiti-prone areas. Resene Uracryl GraffitiShield can be specified and applied so that if graffiti does occur it can be removed without damaging the paint beneath.

six weeks, I transformed the gallery and created all the artworks and a hanging installation for the exhibition. Employing a blend of Resene Lumbersider Low Sheen with various mixed media, the paintings had a unique finish to them while the gallery walls, painted in Resene Red Oxide, evoked a nostalgic smokers' lounge ambience."

Currently, Justine is preparing for two more exhibitions that will take place this year – one in Melbourne and the other in Tokyo. "These new bodies of work take on a more light-hearted theme, focusing on human connection and embracing a pastel romantic aesthetic," she says. "I can't wait to showcase these works with a fresh direction to the public."

Looking ahead, Justine hopes that she'll get opportunities to paint murals overseas. "I've always had a dream of painting a mural in an old-school New York restaurant or bar that's filled with dark mahogany and dimly lit lamps," she says. "I also romanticise painting amongst old European architecture in a town hall or church that is hundreds of years old. It's not just about the paint on the walls, it's about merging my art with the history and character of remarkable settings."

For anyone interested in becoming a muralist, Justine recommends getting as much hands-on experience as you can before embarking on your own projects. "I'd encourage any early career muralist to assist as many other muralists as possible. I have learnt so much from working with other artists and I have found them generous with their knowledge."

"I'd also encourage them to experiment and do as much personal work as possible," she adds. "In a field where the number of muralists is on the rise, the ability to bring unique methods and techniques to the table becomes invaluable. Personal exploration not only hones one's artistic identity but also contributes to the diversity and innovation within the muralist community as a whole." **BW**

To see more of Justine's colourful work, check out her Instagram feed at [www.instagram.com/justinemcallister](http://www.instagram.com/justinemcallister).

# Justine's current favourite colour combo



"This unexpected colour palette formed the basis for my Urban Canvas Mural Festival wall. The work was an entangled pattern of botanicals that mimicked the residential gardens in the Canterbury area. These colours gave the work a slight vintage feel, but the real hero of the piece was the background in Resene Havoc that made the muted tones of the flowers sing."



**above:** Justine's creation for the Urban Canvas Mural Festival transformed an underpass with an explosion of spring and summer blossoms painted in Resene Lumbersider Low Sheen tinted to Resene Careys Pink, Resene Flower Power, Resene Green Smoke, Resene Havoc, Resene Mallard, Resene Moody Blue, Resene Paddock, Resene Poprock, Resene Portage, Resene Sahara, Resene Vida Loca and Resene White. Images by Holly Hawkins. Project representation (for all mural projects shown) by Eddie Zammit.

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|--|---------------------|--|----------------|--|------------------|--|----------------|--|----------------|
|  | Resene Flower Power |  | Resene Poprock |  | Resene Vida Loca |  | Resene Paddock |  | Resene Mallard |
|--|---------------------|--|----------------|--|------------------|--|----------------|--|----------------|