

The Evolution of an Idea to an Award Winning Bear

The Australian Bear Award Winner talks to Sandra Wigzell about her passion for bears and creating winning competition bears.



Bronson, Wesley, Ben, Tuppie, Jacob and Banjo at the front



Billy-Joe – adopted

“I’m influenced by whatever pops into my head at the time and appeals to me, I’m always influenced by animals, big, little, hairy, scaly, cute, dangerous, beautiful or ugly, they all have something that touches me. My Rottweiler has the most gorgeous expression that has been influential on my work.” says Kim Russell.

From her own experience in making bears Kim believes in starting with an idea and letting the bear evolve as you go, to change and move your ideas as you work with the bear if the first concept doesn’t quite work out. In the three years she has been making bears Kim has moved this concept into a top award winning formula experimenting with all sizes and shapes of bears and friends.

Kim became hooked on making bears when, like many bear collectors, she moved from commercial bears such as Steiff, Russ and Hermann to artist bears. Jennie Boylan laughingly refused to sell her one of her bears, Alec, and told Kim that she would have to make the bear if she wanted to own one. Drawing on her dressmaking skills Kim decided to do just that and has never looked back.

Kim went on to do classes with Jennie, Brigit Charles, Jo Rhodes, Margaret McEvoy and Netta Mannino, her latest class was with Linda Benson. “I have found them all to be extremely helpful and encouraging. I have learnt so much and am still learning” reports Kim.

Kim credits her husband with making it possible for her to return to a creative outlet after a 15 year exile from creating. “I was always drawing and sculpting from childhood into my teens, then life got in the way. I love feeling creative again, I find creating bears incredibly relaxing.” Kim’s mother taught her when drawing