

Featherston Phoenix

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Night-time brings artist's dream to life

Marisa King

Having children is a life-changing experience for anyone. But Featherston resident Kimberlee Le Ceve has taken it one step further.

After watching how her daughters Alex (now 4) and Indi (3) responded to the pictures in their storybooks, she was inspired to become an illustrator, and in September was shortlisted in an international competition to become Ethicool's next illustrator of children's books.

Entrants were asked to illustrate a passage from a new children's book about a girl who can't speak but expresses herself through art, music and dance. Kimberlee heard about the competition just 24 hours before it closed.

Overcoming several technical issues – “My computer crashed, Photoshop malfunctioned and the digital drawing tablet decided not to work either” – she submitted her illustration at the final hour after working on it overnight.

Although she didn't win, Kimberlee was happy to make the shortlist of five out of 50 entrants.

“They told me I was very close. They've promised to hire me to illustrate other children's books, starting next year.”

Kimberlee is a self-taught artist who previously worked as a web developer in Wellington before having children and moving to the Wairarapa with her husband Manu two and a half years ago.

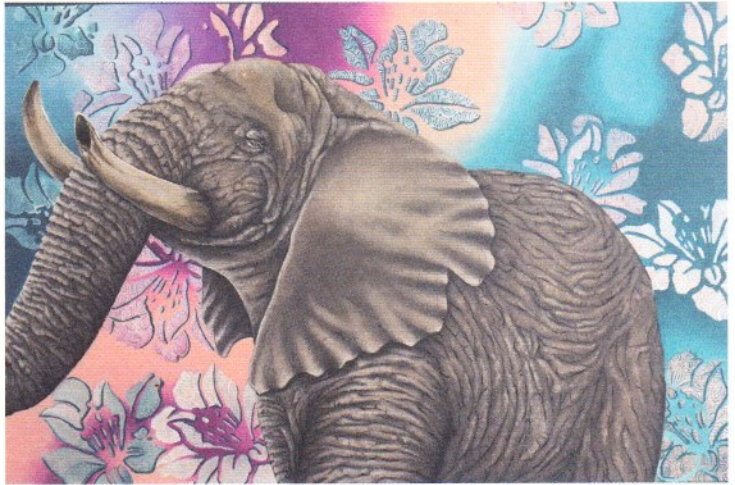
“Reading stories to my girls and seeing all the artwork in their storybooks, the wonder in their eyes and the way they pick out different little things... it changed my perspective on art and pictures and I just wanted to start creating stories in the form of books for young children.”

Kimberlee now slots her illustrating around part-time work at Dot Kids Early Learning Centre in Greytown and caring for her daughters. She mostly works in the evenings after the girls have gone to bed.

Also a painter, she has created works using a variety of mediums, including acrylic paintings and children's portraits. Although her illustrations haven't been published yet, Kimberlee and Manu (a professional firefighter in Avalon)



Kimberlee with daughters Alex and Indi



Colourful Journey (acrylic on canvas)

are jointly working on a storybook they hope to self-publish. Written by Manu, it's about a girl who dreams about venturing out at night to find her Pappa, a shift worker. Along the way she encounters other essential workers like service station attendants, policemen and nurses.

Kimberlee's long-term dream is to become a full-time illustrator.

“I'd love to make my girls proud and have them say, ‘That's my Mamma's book’.”



Kimberlee's competition entry