I am AccessArt: Tracy McGuinness-Kelly

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Tracy McGuinness-Kelly is a British born artist whose background lies heavily in Illustration. “The way I perceive my work is striving to tap into my childhood subconscious, trying to remember those feelings, thoughts and dreams,whilst simultaneously utilizing my adult artistic experience and editing skills”

Tracy was educated at Salford College receiving a BA in Illustration.

She lived in the U.S. for 16 years, where she worked for Hallmark Cards, creating award winning illustration and design then a freelance illustrator in Brooklyn NY, clients included ; Starbucks Coffee, Nickelodeon T.V. American Girl, Unicef, Time Warner, Forbes magazine, Fast Company, Crate and Barrel amongst others. Tracy subsequently secured a two book contract with Little Brown and company to write and illustrate 'Bad Cat' a series of children's books. Also translated and published in Japan, South Korea and Portugal.

Now back in the U.K Tracy continues her work as a freelance artist. Her work is naturally moving towards education where Tracy collaborates with schools to create beautiful vibrant displays that can be directly linked to the curriculum. She is very interested in a stronger integration of creativity into school projects and has received a lot of very good feedback regarding children responding really well to the creative process inspiring them in all areas of their education such as creative writing and hands on skills much needed in life. She is also continuing to develop her beloved Bad Cat character as a vehicle for teaching and learning. Tracy also has a great desire to animate her work.

"In My Own World." I scan lots of textures, patterns and doodles and some marks made by my son aged about 2, then I create multiple layers in photoshop. I then print out onto water colour paper or canvas and continue to embellish with fine glitter.

Tissue collage on canvas. This was one of my first really large format 'break out pieces' created soon after moving from my Hallmark job in Kansas City to Brooklyn New York.

In the words of Pablo Picasso "*Every child is an artist, the problem is to remain an artist once we grow up*"

And Henri Matisse "*I would like to capture the freshness of vision which is characteristic of extreme youth when all the world is new to it*"

Current Projects in Schools

As a growing and developing artist, some of my recent projects in primary schools have turned out to be some of the most fulfilling work I have ever done and want to continue doing. My goal is to harness the children's raw creativity and enthusiasm, harvest it, then use my expertise and experience as a commercial artist to create beautiful meaningful works of art that speak clearly of collaboration. I use archival fine art materials because I want these pieces to last a long time ie:permanently for a playground or temporary beautiful indoor displays linked to the curriculum. As a professional commercial illustrator and author of children's books it is important to me to keep a real freshness and honesty in my work. Also becoming a mother has been a great learning experience, watching and working with my son and seeing his art develop into something very individual to him.

I think without realising it children are the greatest of teachers.

Cut Paper Collaged Indoor Mural, Ludworth Primary School, Marple.

I have always been drawn to and inspired by children's art. I love the natural curiosity and their fearless approach. I try really hard to make sure my own work is not contrived by nuturing the childlike confidence needed to let go of any inibitions whilst understanding that I have to fulfill the requirements of my clients. Giving a very fresh and unexpected outcome is why they hired me and if I cannot achieve that I am

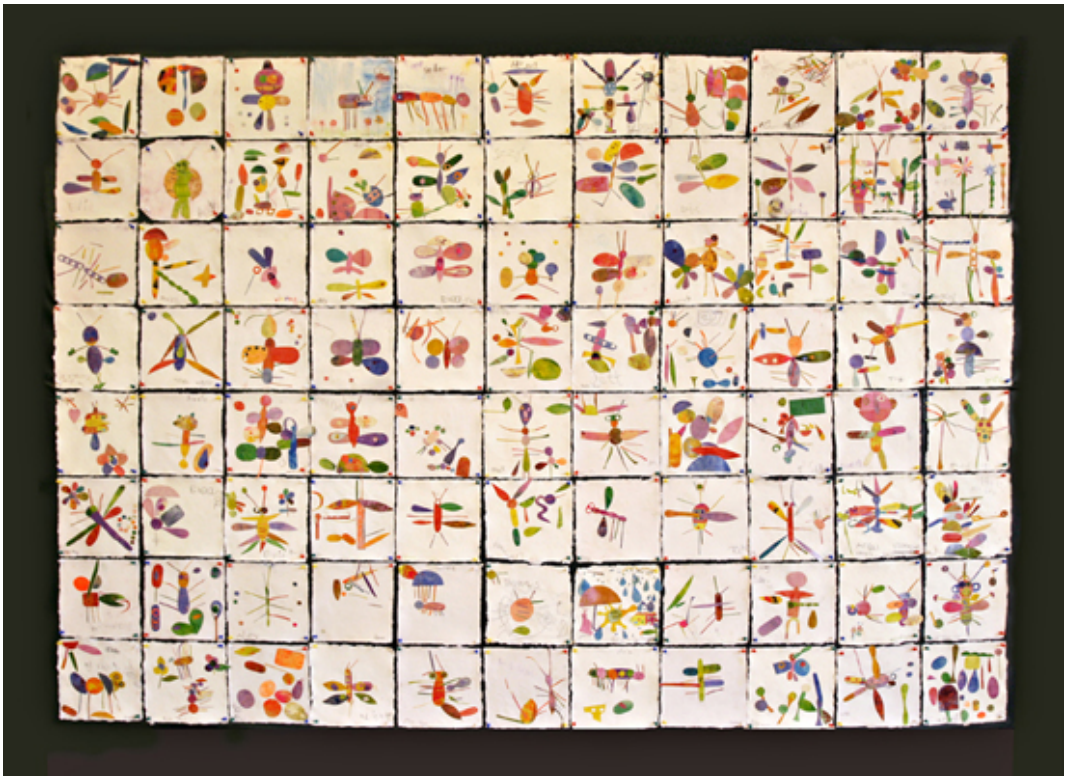
not doing my job. I have noticed younger children are the most experimental and have a very bold approach: as they get older that starts to shut down, the process of slowly losing ones individuality. Some very strong ones manage to keep hold of it.

“*I would like to capture the freshness of vision which is characteristic of extreme youth when all the world is new to it*” Henri Matisse

The All Saints School Outdoor Mural

Teaching the children skills like cutting out and gluing very small shapes, or learning a certain painting technique all require presence of mind and concentration. Skills to help them fulfill an idea they might have in mind is a real confidence booster. Technical ability is very important because it enables them to think and complete tasks for themselves in their own personal style. I don’t try to control them too much because this is where my own learning takes place. The magic happens when within the constraints of the brief or product development true individual freedom of expression and raw creativity is allowed to take place. This is also where I get my inspiration in abundance. Sometimes one of the children creates a ‘trend’: something the other children see and like and then instantly want to emulate/copy. Therefore starting a fashion or being a ‘trend setter’ happens very naturally. Sometimes the originator does not get

the credit from peers but other times it is also clear to see the individuals who are strong ideas people, something that should be rewarded and recognised and something for the others to work towards. Individuals confident enough to think for themselves and also inspire not overpower others are valuable members of a team.

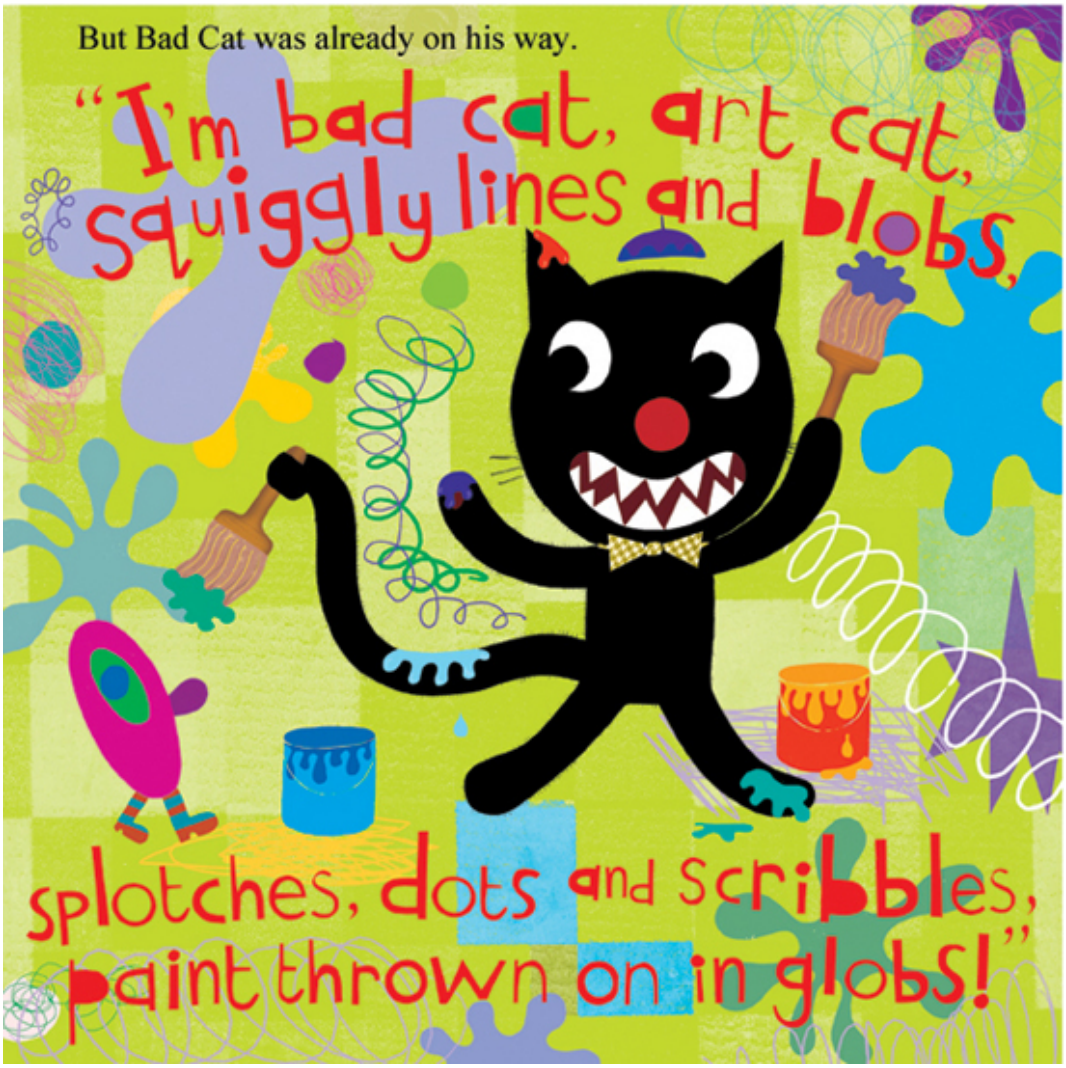


The Minibeast Project

My current work encompasses this idea and as the project leader I use the children as willing worker bees to create one cohesive collaborative finished piece. Of course I control certain aspects like the colour pallette, technique, materials etc. I am a designer so have a very clear idea in my mind of how I want the finished piece to feel and look but allowing, looking and hoping for wonderful unexpected surprises or ‘happy accidents’ to occur and much to my delight always do.

Chalk Pastel Drawings Created by 4 and 5 year olds

I see some children being hesitant, but with a little nudge most overcome this and become very engaged in the job at hand. It is a great way to teach the mind how to think for itself even where order has to exist e.g. knowing yourself to be part of a team working for the same cause, all using the same materials, same subject etc but then also having the freedom to be individual. The children are inspired by the strong beautiful colours which I often premix or paint on to tissue or newspaper as usually the style I use is collage. This is also a great way to use up any half pots of acrylic paints sometimes to be found abandoned in school stock cupboards, painting sheets of acid free white tissue [like Eric Carle] ready for children to use enables them to cut out free form shapes, see how colours react to one another,work out a design before gluing down or commiting to a final layout allowing room to play, experiment and be innovative.



Bad Cat

Beautiful materials that last give authenticity to the project and build trust when children understand that their work is going to be part of something bigger. I gather all of the children's work take it to my studio and then create the final piece. This is where my professional training takes hold and I combine elements of my own work with the childrens in a sympathetic way as not to overtake or overshadow their work but to celebrate it. When the children see the final outcome they first look for their own individual piece within the large work. When they find it they are very pleased and proud. This is where the harvesting of the beautiful raw material has been manufactured into a finely crafted finished product. It is a great combination of skills. I could not of done this

without them or them without me. With that hopefully comes a greater understanding of needing one another to achieve larger goals things we cannot achieve alone. As an artist I love this method of working it opens my mind to a lot of great possibilities.

Job creation comes to mind. I would love to develop my own brand-based on this idea one that encompasses education which as well as art would also include creative writing.

Building a Mural

The outcomes have been really successful beautiful works of art in their own right that can be enjoyed for many years to come. Hopefully empowering young people to keep hold of their own personal voice and understanding and proving that we can all contribute in our own small and individual way for the greater good of all.

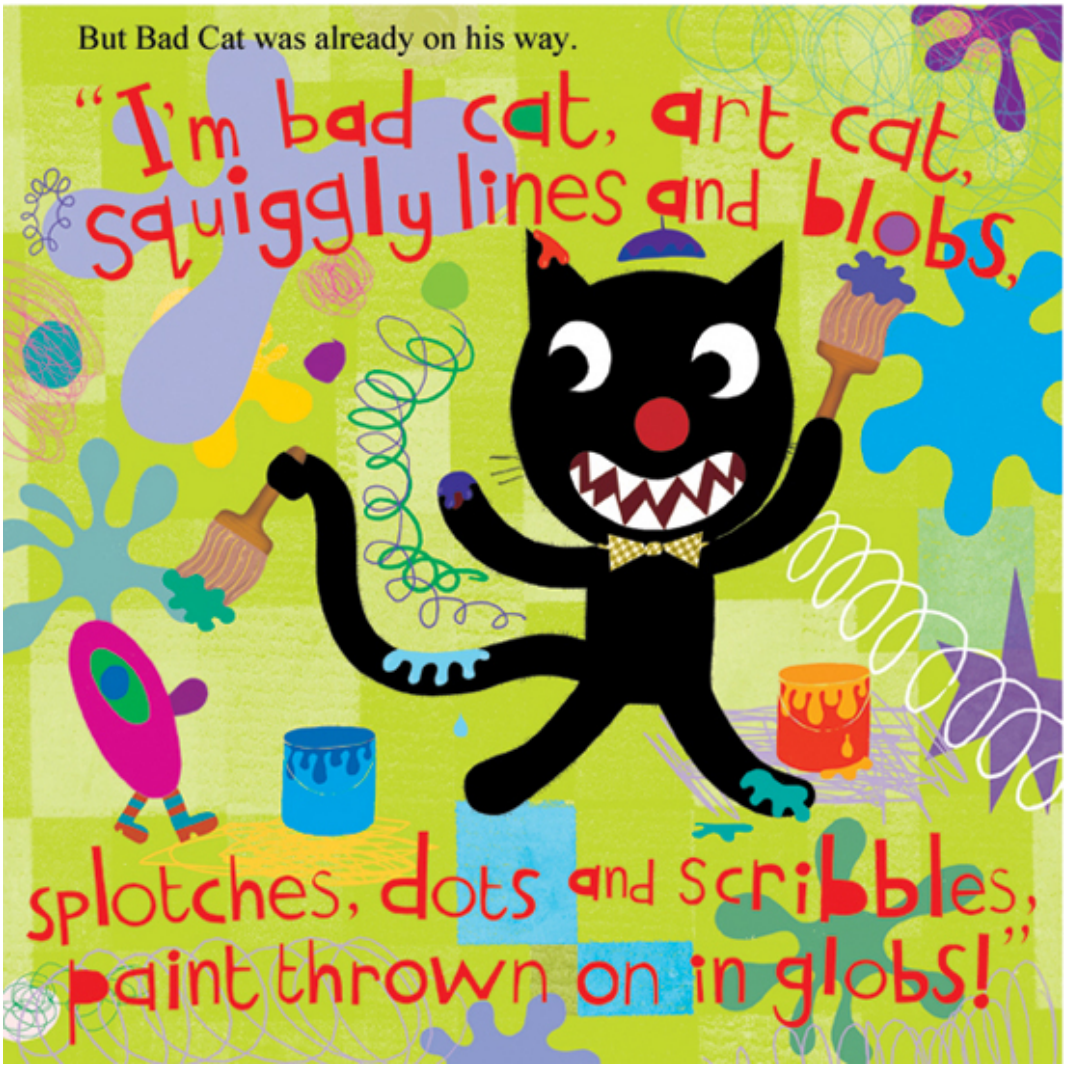
Paper Quilt

Tracy McGuinness-Kelly

teelee.net

http://jodibobo.blogspot.co.uk/2012/01/shapes-and-bad-cat.html
http://eye-likey.blogspot.co.uk/2012/03/eye-likey-chats-with-british-artist.html?spref=fb
http://rachaeltaylordesigns.blogspot.co.uk/2013/07/artist-review-tracy-mcguinness-kelly.html

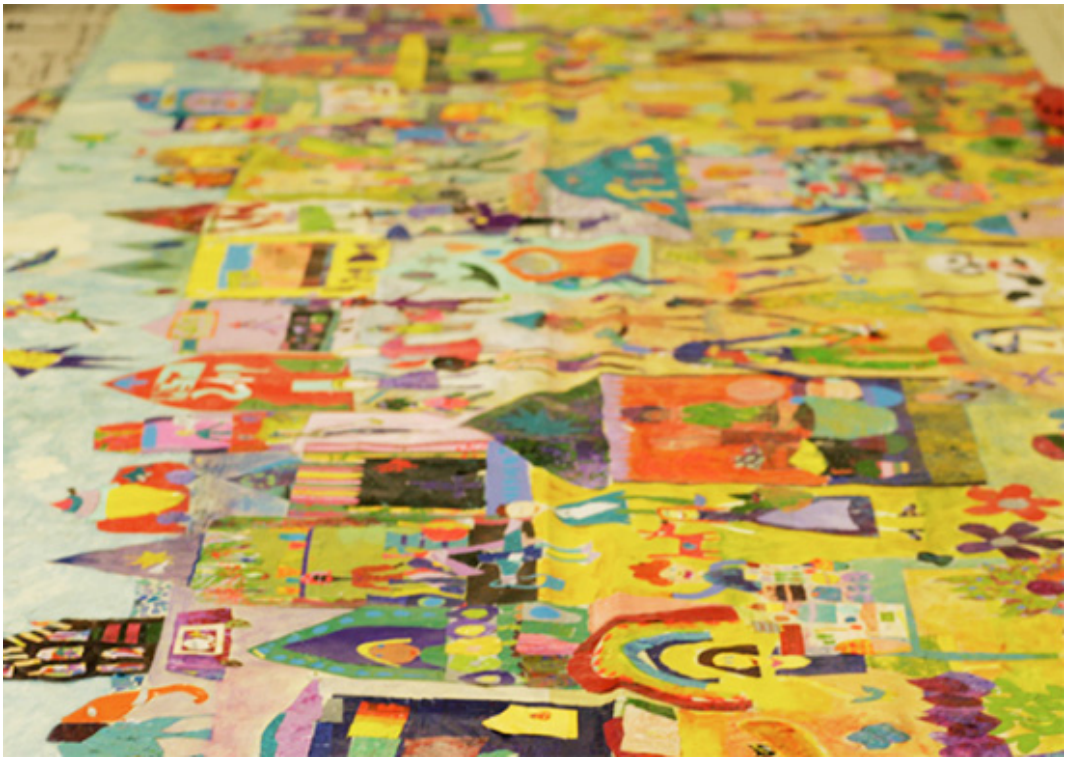
Please explore these additional resources by Tracy McGuinness-Kelly:



Bad Cat: Inspiration for Art Week

Drawing Spiral Snails

The Minibeast Project



The Ludworth and All Saints Murals