

Ella Webb well and truly in the loop

**Description**



Artist Ella Webb is reviving her teaching talents in a new venture offering after-school art classes to kids (and summer classes to visiting kids) in a new studio right in the heart of Warrnambool.

### Words and pictures by Carol Altmann

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A02F2F;"]T [/dropcap]alented Warrnambool visual artist **Ella Webb** is combining her creative and education skills – she also holds a teaching degree – to counter a steady decline in art classes being offered to kids in school.

"It is terrible, but the fact is that many kids don't have any exposure to art, or very little," she says.

Ongoing budget cuts, which were at their worst in the 1990s, have seen many public schools scale back on art, music, drama and other subjects considered less essential to an ever-changing curriculum focussed on meeting national testing standards.

**"I wanted to do something about giving kids a place to enjoy art. Where there is no marking, no 'hurry up and finish that' and where they can just hang out with other kids," Ella says.**

After a year of plotting and planning and literally walking around Warrnambool to find a suitable venue, Ella has opened the doors on **Loop Studio**, right in Liebig St and just a few doors down from that other end of the cultural spectrum, McDonalds.

Ella has set up a space for kids of all ages to come and learn art after school, or during the school holidays, and what they learn will vary from drawing, to making their own cards and wrapping paper for Christmas, through to painting, sculpture and screenprinting.

"(It) is a space for kids to be artists, creators and makers, and be with other like-minded kids.

"It will always be fun, it will be bright and it will be messy," Ella laughs.



Bright, funky colours have transformed the former Olive Ketels's Salon into an art studio for kids.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A02F2F;"]K [/dropcap]ids mucking around with paint and printmaking while cool tunes play from the ipod (Ella also plans to offer free wi-fi) is a 360-degree turn from the venue's former life as the legendary **Olive Ketels' Salon** that specialised in corsetry and lingerie.

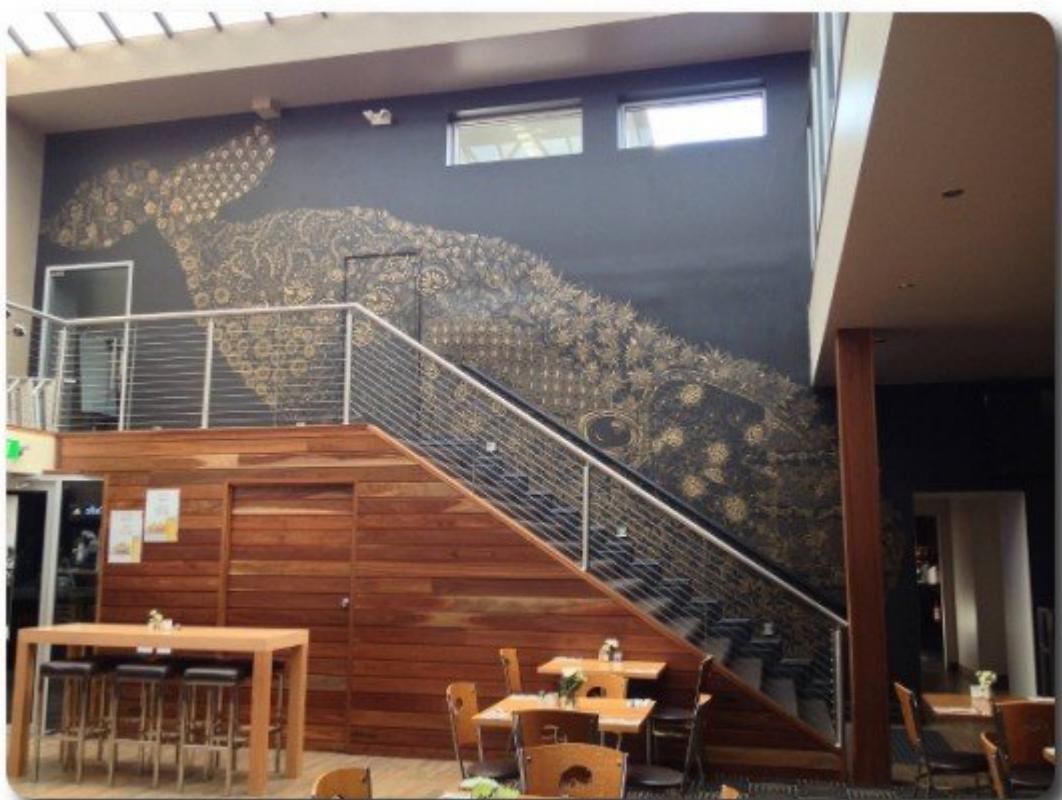
"I was sitting here on my very first day and I got really excited when my first customer, an older woman, walked through the door but then she stopped, looked and said 'oh, you're not Olive Ketels', and walked out again," Ella says, laughing at the memory.

Despite only opening in late September, Loop Studio already has 20 children who attend regularly and is growing steadily as word spreads.

It is an affirmation that Ella is on the right path, despite all of the usual fears and nerves about going out on a limb: especially in a high-profile retail space.

"I have had an absolutely brilliant business mentor in **John Costello** (from Koroit), who just gave me the confidence to believe that it will work.

"I still don't know if it will work, but it feels so very nice to be here, in this space," she says.



The golden whale at the Whalers Inn is an example of Ella's drawing skills at their best. Image courtesy Ella Webb.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A02F2F;"]F [/dropcap]ortunately for those adults who love Ella's work – and there are many – she will also continue to develop and expand her own creativity.

Already she has taken her skills in intricate drawing and applied them to large-scale murals and chalkboards. Her huge, golden whale adorns the steps of the Whaler's Inn, on the corner of Timor and Liebig streets, and was completed using dozens of gold-coloured crayons that were worn down to stubs.

There are also hopes of staging a solo exhibition in Melbourne, so that her art is pushed beyond the borders of the south-west. It would be her first solo exhibition since she began to focus on developing an art career in 2012.

**As for Loop Studios, Ella is already planning exhibitions of the children's work and, one day, would like to be able to take Loop on the road.**

"I have always wanted one of those big Airstream retro caravans and drive it around the countryside as a mobile studio, pulling up in the main street of towns: wouldn't that be brilliant?" she laughs.

Knowing Ella's drive and determination so far, it is most likely just a matter of time.



Since opening less than two months ago, Ella's classes have already attracted regular clients. Some of her own artwork is displayed behind her.

**[box]** For full details about classes, parties and other events, you can find Loop Studios on [the web here](#) and on [Facebook here](#). Contact Ella on 0401 877 365 To see more of Ella's work, see [our first story here](#).**[/box]**

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