

## Tilly Keenan – 18

FOR MOAMA ARTIST Tilly Keenan the eyes tell the story.

She tries to convey this in her own drawings which are mainly portraits of friends or their pets.

"I could never do landscapes because I would never know where to start and my patience would run out," she said.

"But with a face I always start with the eyes, and then the nose and eventually the drawing becomes a portrait."

Tilly has already shown an artistic maturity beyond her years in the work she produces.

It started as little doodles in her workbooks at school until a neighbour, who is also an artist, brought her some faces to draw.

"I was especially inspired by this one of an old man in black and white," she said.

"From then on I went through a stage of just drawing old people because of the wrinkly detail in the faces, and ever since that my love for drawing portraits has grown.

"I began getting commissioned by others to do portraits, mainly of their loved ones who had passed away.

"Seeing their reactions when they saw the final product was always rewarding and such a special feeling, and that was another factor behind my passion for drawing for others."

Having recently graduated Year 12 from Moama Anglican Grammar School and entering her first year of a bachelor of teaching/bachelor of arts (visual arts) at the Australian Catholic University (ACU) she made the move to Melbourne.

And saying goodbye to her home town of Moama and her closest friends and family was a daunting task.

"I thought I would never be able to navigate my way around Melbourne, but after just a few weeks I already felt like I knew my way around the tram system and was even getting people asking me for directions," she said.

Moving into residency at St Mary's College at Melbourne University made it easier to tackle the minefield of the city.

She was instantly consumed in the college lifestyle and felt comfortable and secure in her surroundings.

"The way Melbourne is stereotyped I was a bit worried about getting around the city by myself but honestly I have not felt unsafe once," Tilly said.

"I think living on college and being surrounded by so many people similar to you was definitely a reassuring feeling."



Tilly joked she was a true city girl now, but she still comes home to see her family and friends and play netball at Echuca United.

Selling her drawings has been a way for Tilly to make money towards her living expenses.

She said she still enjoyed drawing and was especially enjoying her course work which was currently focusing on life drawing.

"I'm studying secondary teaching and majoring in art (with a minor in mathematics) so this semester is shaping up to be a lot about both," Tilly said.

"They were always my favourite subjects at school so I love it.

"We've been doing a lot of life drawing, which is something I don't often do as I usually take inspiration from a photograph.

"It's been a good experience and hopefully one day I can start doing my portraits from life."

She had always wanted to be a mathematics teacher since starting high school and as her interest in art grew she decided to pursue both—an arts and mathematics teacher.

"In class at school my friends would sit either side of me and once the teacher finished explaining a topic, I would explain it again to them in a different way so they could understand it more easily from another point of view," Tilly said.

"Then last year I started doing math tutoring and I really enjoyed it so it made me feel confident in knowing I still wanted to be a teacher."

But art still has her firmly in its grip as people continue to commission her work and develop her skills every day.

After a slow start she began making a name for herself among friends and family who

would pay her to draw portraits of them or their pets.

"It became a good source of income for me," Tilly said. "I was getting my name and work out to the community through my Tilly Keenan ART page.

"It was really useful because I was even creating work for people in Perth and Queensland who just happened across what I have been doing."

She first began selling her work in Year 10 when all her friends were starting casual or part-time jobs.

She was drawing lots around that time and decided instead of getting a job she would draw for people.

And it worked.

Before heading to university she began selling her artwork quite regularly and was able to earn enough to cover her living expenses before moving down to Melbourne.

Her creative flare extends to music with Tilly spending most of her free time playing the drums, which she has been learning for 10 years.

During school Tilly would often perform in front of her peers at assemblies, but was most comfortable in her bedroom at home playing to an audience of one—herself.

Her artwork is still hanging on the walls at Moama Anglican Grammar School which means a great deal to the young artist as it is a place which holds some of her dearest memories and played a large part in shaping the person she is today.

With so much talent and the world at her fingertips there's no telling where she will be 10 years from now but she will continue to let the eyes of other people tell their stories while she creates her own.