

people | KAPUNDA SOUTH AUSTRALIA



seize the day

MEET THE WOMAN WHO IS CHANGING THE ARTISTIC LANDSCAPE
OF THE BAROSSA WITH THE LAUNCH OF SALON ROUGE.

WORDS ANNA FLANDERS PHOTOGRAPHY MARK ROPER

The former mechanic's workshop has been given an injection of colour. Jacqueline found the daybed in a second-hand store, then added a patchwork throw from the local Lutheran Quilting Group. **FACING PAGE** Jacqueline leads painting tours in the countryside near her home.





The artist with *Soft Pink Peony*, an oil on canvas. ABOVE A smoke haze envelopes the Barossa as farm burn-offs prepare for new-season sowing. FACING PAGE Salon Rouge is large enough to also incorporate Jacqueline's studio.

JACQUELINE COATES TAKES CHANCES. Artistic chances, financial chances and life chances. In fact, her life has been formed by courageous creative gambles — and with the opening of Salon Rouge, an exciting new studio and arts centre in South Australia's Barossa region, she's just taken one of her characteristic leaps of faith.

Some 13 years ago came the truly courageous decision to quit a successful career as an art director in Sydney's advertising industry, a move that eventually brought her to Kapunda on the Clare Valley side of the Barossa.

Did friends and family lure her back to the country? No. This very Pittwater girl who grew up surrounded by the sand, shore and boats of Sydney's northern beaches had simply fallen in love with the romance and potential of a crumbling stone barn halfway across the country from her roots. A single mother in her early 30s with another child on the way, she knew no-one in the area but was propelled by an overwhelming desire to paint. It was a gutsy move by anyone's standards.

"I wasn't on my true path. I just knew it — it was a very uncomfortable feeling," says Jacqueline of her advertising days. "I would spend all my money going to Paris — the Louvre, Monet's garden and the parks — to draw. Being in those inspiring places was good for my art: but I was wedging my art life around a full-time job."

Thirteen years down the track, with determination, tears and struggle behind her, she admits the early days were tough and, at times, lonely, though now she has her beautifully renovated barn (which featured in the March 2005 issue of *Country Style*), two fine children — Hannibal, 10, and Lily, 8 — and a successful art business. However, just when she had achieved some peace and comfort, she's taken her next big chance.

"The trouble was I couldn't find anything," she says of living and working in the barn. "I'd go to pick up the phone and could hardly get to it because there were wads of files. I'd be looking for a piece of paper and couldn't find it... I was trying to do domestics on top of having an office in the kitchen."

Plus, there were the artworks. Everywhere. It's the same avalanche that greets our arrival — the bold-but-sensual floral paintings that are her trademark, plus works for an upcoming show, a series of wax works for another exhibition, still lifes for another show — and then there's her Italian series. "I always have several bodies of work on the go which, as an artist, you have to do," she says.

While this points to an expanding business and the need for a dedicated office, it also had an even more significant meaning. Jacqueline had found a place that would nurture an emerging artist and mother — but art, life and opportunity once again pushed her out of her comfort zone.

She had noticed a rundown building just off the main street of Kapunda — a former motor mechanic's garage >

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and workshop that had been on the market for about two years. In true Jacqueline style, the actual purchase was a last-minute decision, finalised while she was on a painting tour in France and Italy in 2007.

"The paperwork was happening while I was overseas," she recalls. "I took a big breath and thought, 'Oh my god, I'm doubling the mortgage!'. I had no savings, so had to borrow against the equity in my barn. When I bought it, people said, 'You must have had vision'. I just said, 'I was desperate and I could afford it: I'll work it out later!'"

Jacqueline had a limited budget to renovate what was essentially a rundown shed. However, the experience and confidence gained from her first renovation allowed her to see possibilities others may have missed. In addition she had the invaluable help of Kyneton local Harry Makris.

"I couldn't have done it without him," Jacqueline says, adding that Harry was the prime mover behind the paving at the front entrance and the pressed metal casts around what she calls 'Harry's Bar'. Thus Salon Rouge was born.


Today, Jacqueline is no longer just tightly focused on her own art. She's become more holistic, acting as an agent, mentor and teacher for adults and children. It's become more of a business, rather than a personal vocation and she has employed Ingrid Crow to help her run the space.

Not content with staying local, she has reached into her past to rekindle connections with artist networks from her Sydney days — and stretched out internationally, too. People from throughout Australia and New Zealand have been drawn to Salon Rouge to paint and study with her.

Jacqueline's own art has been affected. "Naturally, here I want to paint the landscape and I take my students out there. It's very textural, so today I use a brush, palette, knife, sponge... I still paint my flowers, but I take those techniques into them. I'm really enjoying that."

Today, the former workshop is a cavernous home to two gallery spaces, where you will find Jacqueline's work and that of local and national artists in themed exhibitions. She runs painting classes in the Barossa and Italy (the Jacqueline Coates Arts & Garden Tour), and holds courses in techniques such as felting. Plus, there are her children's classes using coloured beeswax, a moulding technique she learnt in Italy.

Her art world is expanding and she's taking the art lovers of the Barossa with her. While professional planning obviously played a part, it seems that it was time for Jacqueline to step out from her barn, take her passion and drive to the community — and to share her artistic journey. And that's a very Barossa thing to do. *
Salon Rouge is at 19 Carrington Street, Kapunda South Australia. 0412 587 438; www.salonrougegallery.com



"It will be a long time before I exhaust this area," Jacqueline says. BELOW Rose lovers have discovered her particular talent for painting flowers and regularly commission paintings like this vision of a creamy David Austin favourite.

