

# Artistic Journey

By ROBYN ISRAEL

**K**ym Brundritt knew she was an artist as a little girl. Every Christmas, she would receive a new box of crayons – a 96 pack – which would keep her busy throughout the year.

Her father said she was the easiest kid to manage because she could entertain herself for hours and hours. Years later, the crayons have been replaced by acrylic paints, but Brundritt is still driven to create works of art. Her small living room, which doubles as her studio, is

adorned from top to bottom with her figurative paintings (and those of her boyfriend, Rory). They range from the whimsical to the ethereal, from jeans and sneakers to a serene brown-haired goddess who reappears throughout Brundritt's home.

With her enlarged, spiral-shaped belly, the image radiates cosmic energy and creation. "I'm pretty disciplined," she said. "I paint every day, even if it's just a black background.

Or I might draw designs on canvas bags. I'm not one to just sit and watch TV. I always need to be doing something."

Asked what she is currently working on, Brundritt points to a canvas of alien-like figures with elongated faces and pursed smiles. They look cute and playful, and would probably fit in nicely in an animated sci-fi movie.

"I call them Pod-heads," she said. "They're the people you find and connect with. I've been painting so many of them lately. Maybe it's because I'm trying to find my Pod people," she smiled.

Brundritt moved to London three years ago, intent on taking her art to a higher level. But the Leamington native – a self-described hippie with a fondness for the Grateful Dead and Bob Dylan – has found the change difficult. She is slowly trying to establish herself in a new

market after having left behind a familiar place where locals knew her artwork and frequented her store Whimsical Creations.

Even now, she still works festivals closer to her hometown, such as Art in the Park in Windsor. She has been a regular there for the past 14 years.

"I could do a show here but I don't have a following," she said. "Plus the booths are a lot more expensive in London. It costs me \$300 for two days in Windsor. I'd have to have so much more product here and I hand-paint everything which takes longer."

The only local store that sells Brundritt's artwork is Gift of Art on Richmond Row. The store carries not only her paintings, but also her hand-painted frames and handbags, which feature spiritual and inspirational sayings. In May, Brundritt will be one of six artists featured in Art Focus, a juried show at St. Paul's Cathedral. Her goal is to eventually work part-time, so she can focus more on her art. But with a full-time job at Pier 1 is challenging.

"It's why I came to London, but I haven't wholeheartedly done that yet," she admitted. "My grandma always asks me, 'Why did you have to leave Leamington?' So I need to show her that I'm going to do what I set out to do. Otherwise there's no point in my being here.

"It hasn't been easy. London is a lot more conservative than I thought it would be," she said. "Here I thought I was moving to the big city, but I feel like the oddball at work."

When Brundritt left Leamington, she also left behind the one person who could truly understand what she is going through: her mother, Pamela Atkinson, an artist in her own right.

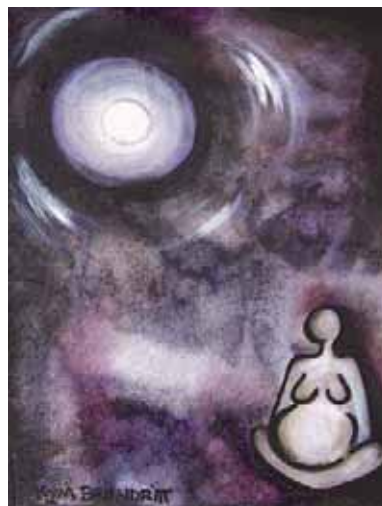
It was Atkinson who encouraged her daughter to pursue a spiritual and artistic path and she has remained a constant source of inspiration and support. To Brundritt, she is more like a sister than a mother, given the mere 17 years that separate them.

Ask Brundritt to talk about her work and the soft-spoken artist is more comfortable talking about the mixed-media creations of her mother. She knows she still needs to work on promoting herself, which many artists find deeply challenging.

"My Dad always used to make fun of me. I'd be at the festival, in back of the booth. He'd tell people, 'She's hiding behind that rack of ponchos.' It's easier to promote someone else than yourself."

"I can remember this painter at Art in the Park, who was so confident about her works. She priced them between \$600 and \$1,200 and she truly believed that people were going to pay that amount. By the end of the weekend most of her works had been sold. Mine were priced between \$150 and \$250.

"It's a matter of knowing your work is good and that it has value. I remember a comment I heard once at a show. Someone wanted me to lower the price. But I wasn't going to go lower. I thought it was reasonable and I had put a lot of time into it. They walked away, thinking I should have accepted their offer. That bothered me. You wouldn't walk



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into an appliance store and ask, 'Can I give you \$50 for the dryer?'"

Brundritt would like nothing better than to counter the stereotype of the starving artist. She bristles at the reactions of some people, who, upon hearing that she is an artist, ask, 'So what else do you do?'

"I want to be able to say, 'Nothing.' That is what I do."

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