



Above Right: Some of the award-winning bears in Kim's collection.

Above top: Yorgy (adopted)

Above Paddy and Hudson (both adopted)

"I don't specialise in any particular kind of bear, but I have been told that my bears and critters have a 'look' of their own that is distinctive," she explains. "I tend to create only bare bears, not dressing or accessorising them much - I have tried dressing bears but it doesn't work for me.

"I have also tried the concept of limited editions in the past, but it doesn't work for me at all," she explains. "Apart from the fact that I get bored with making the same bear, they never turn out the same anyway, no matter how hard I try. The needle-felted bears are even harder to replicate, so I have given up even taking orders for the same bears. I make sure collectors know that their bear will be similar, but not exactly the same, even though they have an edition number. I have found that the collectors are happy with this system as they all end up with an original bear anyway, even if it has the same name or is a limited edition.

"My designs are changing all the time, it keeps me motivated to experiment with bears and other critters constantly. I don't want to get stuck in a rut as then the enjoyment of creating flies out the door and you end up finding any excuse to avoid making bears. "I love creating the face. That is the most important aspect for me, as it's where I get to project who the bear is, his own little personality."

Kim works from home, where she has taken over for bear making two bedrooms and an activity room which is completely separate from the rest of the house.

"I'm a bit of a hermit anyway, so I love being at home. With no kids, I really don't have intense family commitments and my husband is away a lot, which works out perfectly for me and my bears. Darrin is my 'manager' - he sets the prices, lets me know how much to put back into my business, what shows to attend and he even chooses the majority of which bears to enter in competitions.

"The bit I appreciate most is that he doesn't expect me to cook much - he is happy with toasted sandwiches, as long as he gets something to eat. Even though he's not around much, he supports me completely, and has made it possible for me to do what I love.

"I attend all our shows here in Western Australia, and attended my first interstate show in June this year - for the first time I had to travel to the other side of Australia for the 2007 Gold Coast International Teddy Bear Fair. I love bear shows and meeting all the collectors, but I hate travelling, so thank God for the internet. I sell the majority of my pieces via my website and offer a few pieces occasionally through other bear-related websites I'm a member of, such as Bear Artists Online.

"I love to hear from my collectors and I get a lot of new collectors through word of mouth - they see their friends' new Russell Bears additions and end up wanting to see what I have available for them. I hope to see my bears in the future as being highly sought-after collectables that can be loved and enjoyed by anyone that owns one, and hold a special place in their heart forever."

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