

# SPOTLIGHT ON RIKKI CLARKE

OWNER AND DIRECTOR,  
CREATIVE SPACES, PERTH



Perth-born designer Rikki Clarke has boomeranged to London and back and catapulted her career from two-dimensional graphic design into and three-dimensional exhibition design. Working closely with local communities, Rikki and her team have created many immersive spaces across Perth and regional WA, connecting people of all ages with rich histories, cultures and natural environments, from Herdsman Lake to the Kalbarri Skywalk (Kaju Yatka).

“ I love hearing the amazing stories of communities and get really excited about the creative problem-solving journey we take to re-imagine the spaces that share those significant stories. ”

## Give us your bbq pitch. What do you do?

I'm an exhibition designer leading a team that works mainly in the field of history and heritage. So that might be designing graphics, furniture, signage and interior exhibition space for new builds or heritage buildings adapted for reuse as museums, galleries, visitor centres and interpretive centres. We collaborate with a diverse range of other professionals too, from architects and scientists to historians and curators.

## Did you always plan to work in this industry?

I've always been drawn to the creative fields. My earliest career dreams were to become a ballet dancer, or a fashion designer, or an architect, but I didn't quite have the body for ballet or the grades for architecture. One of my friends had applied to study film and media at ECU, and I thought that sounded interesting, so I joined her. In the second year, I took an elective in graphic design and loved it. At the time, ECU didn't offer graphic design as a major, so I applied to North Metro TAFE to study a Diploma in Graphic Design.

After graduating, I went to work for one of my lecturers in their graphic design studio in Fremantle. Then I packed up everything to travel Europe and land a job in London. For the first six months, I worked a contract as a graphic designer on a Mediterranean cruise ship. Then I got a job working on magazine layouts for a fabulous lady in Clapham Old Town.

## So, how did you get into exhibition design in WA?

I moved back to my hometown of Perth and took a job as a graphic designer for an exhibition company. We did a lot of the major trade shows, like all the home shows and the EveryWoman Expo. I was working super-long hours and needed to bring some balance back to my life, so I went for a part-time role at Creative Spaces.

Sadly, the then owner of Creative Spaces became unwell and was planning to close the business down. I loved working on the stories and the heritage so much, I couldn't bear to see it all disappear, so offered to buy his business. That was 12 years ago. And the rest, as they say, is history.

## How would you describe yourself?

I'm friendly and approachable, with a lot of empathy for my clients, suppliers and staff. And while my days are full of multi-tasking and collaborating at the office, I'm an introvert outside of work and enjoy quiet time to recharge my batteries.

## What do you love most about the industry?

There are so many possibilities within the design industry. You can focus your study in one specific area from the get-go or take different electives to try something new before you specialise. And there are lots of crossovers in the design industry too, so you have freedom to explore more avenues after you graduate. Working on our team, we have interior architects, designers and graphic designers who all found their own path to exhibition design.

## What's the best part of your job?

I love hearing the amazing stories of communities and get really excited about the creative problem-solving journey we take to re-imagine the spaces that share those significant stories. The Power Up Electricity Museum was perhaps my favourite project. It's one of the largest museums we've worked on to date, and a complete new build that involved working with the client, architect and builder to re-invent an exhibition space for the old World of Energy collection.

## What's your best advice for anyone starting out?

It can be nerve-racking to put yourself and your work out there, but don't be afraid to reach out to industry. Just approach people that you really admire and you're keen to work with because you never know where it will lead. I have a lot of respect for those who take the courage to send their CVs to me and always keep them on file in case something comes up.

## And what's next for you?

I'd like to create space to work on a passion project of my own, and I'd also love the opportunity for Creative Spaces to collaborate with another exhibition design team on larger-scale projects.

## Connect with Rikki on LinkedIn

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/rikkiclarke/>

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