

WORDS
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RUG MAKING AND ILLUSTRATING ARE OLIVIA EDGINTON'S GAMES, AND SHE REALLY PUTS THE FUN INTO THEM.

PHOTOGRAPHY
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The world has the art department at Wainuiomata High School to thank for fostering maker Olivia Edginton's creativity. She says her teachers' incredible support had a huge impact on what she's doing now, which is living in Pōneke/Wellington, balancing her love of crafting rugs and illustrating with two other part-time jobs.

So Olivia, where in the capital do you call home? I live in a little flat in Mount Cook with my partner and some great flatmates. It's a full house but it's so nice having people coming and going all the time. My favourite thing about living here is getting the couch squabs out on the roof and having a beer on a sunny day.

You also have a studio space in Newtown... That's where I make my rugs, and I couldn't ask for a better spot. It's a shared space, so

other cool people do their thing there too. For illustration work, I usually just set up at my desk at home.

Before graduating from Massey University with a Bachelor of Design majoring in textile design, you spent some time in India — how did that happen? It was part of an international internship paper I did at uni, which sent me to work for Jaipur Rugs, who produce their rugs through upskilling women living in rural villages and giving them the tools to weave rugs at home. Going to India started off my rug making because I got to purchase my first tufting guns while I was there. A few years ago, it was super hard to find an affordable supplier anywhere in the Pacific, so I found an online supplier directory and got talking to a guy on Whatsapp, who I paid to bus four hours from Delhi to my hotel to sell me my first tufting guns!

ABOVE Olivia in the studio. How long she spends crafting each rug depends on their size, but for a 1m by 1m design, it'd typically take around 20 hours, spread over a few weeks. She says her favourite part of the trip to India that started it all was getting assigned to a local weaver to collaborate with on a hand-knotted rug. "I provided the colour palette and basic design direction, and she interpreted it freehand. There was a language barrier, but we made some really cool rugs together."

ABOVE Sustainability is something Olivia's always working on and reimagining. "There are a couple of things I do," she says. "I try to make rugs that'll last for a long time, and use 100% New Zealand wool, which means I get to support my local economy, and also get a high-quality natural yarn. Using wool is really important to me, as synthetic yarns are basically made of plastic. So many tiny microfibres are created when a rug is being cut and tufted, and fibres work their way out of the finished product as well. Since I use a wool yarn, all of the yarn waste I create is saved and can be repurposed for stuffing or felting."

You describe your rugs as a fun, colourful take on everyday experiences — do you have a current favourite? The Lancer rug! It was a commissioned piece for a friend who was selling his 1999 Mitsubishi Lancer. The car was on its last legs but they'd been through a lot together, so when he sold it, he used the money to commission the rug.

Last year, you collaborated with Auckland label Checks Downtown on a range of accessories — what did you illustrate for them? I did a water bottle, mug, lighter, beach towel and tee, and now I'm working on some bits and pieces for their Spring/Summer collection. I'm more of a solo act when it comes to rug making, but I do love collaborating, so I got together with my dad recently too, to refurbish a mid-century sideboard I found on the side of the road. It turned out really well, and I learned

a lot about working with wood. We made the legs on a lathe and everything.

You recently produced a comic strip as well... I was inspired after reading the comics *Dog Biscuits* by Alex Graham and *Crisis Zone* by Simon Hanselmann, so I drew a short comic strip about Breaker Bay in Wellington, which is the local nude beach, where receiving some form of male harassment or unwanted attention seems to be inevitable. It was fun to figure out how to spin the weird experiences I've had there into comic form.

What tools and materials do you like to use? For illustration work, I tend to use a mix of analogue and digital tools. I love Muji and Posca pens, and have recently been getting back into using acrylic paints. I use Procreate for digital drawing and sketching out rug designs, and then there's my tufting guns. >



In terms of materials, durability and quality are super important to me when producing rugs and there's a real gap in the market for wool rug yarn, so after years of picking up second-hand and deadstock wool yarn where I could, I finally made enough money from commissions to get my own batch made to my specifications by a local factory. The process took about a year to complete, but the yarn is beautiful to work with, in colours custom-dyed exactly how I wanted. I almost can't believe that I get to make rugs out of yarn that's 100% locally sourced and produced — it's something I'm really proud of.

Where do you find inspiration, and how do you get your mojo back if you lose it? I get inspiration by digging through my own everyday experiences and feelings, and enjoy a bit of workbooking and scanning of drawings to try to make some sense of it

all. If I'm feeling a bit stuck, I have to stop pushing myself to be creative and just let myself exist — unless there's a looming deadline, of course! Spending time cooking elaborate meals and exercising helps, and I find taking the pressure off trying to make anything 'good' does too. Creating without a particular agenda helps me get my flow back.

What part of your work gives you the biggest buzz? With rug making, I love how it all comes together after I've cut off the loose bits of yarn. Each step of the process of making takes a lot of consideration and I can see that when I look at my finished products. But I think the biggest kick I get out of rug making is that every time I finish a commission, I feel as if I've made something that someone's going to keep for the rest of their life. 📌 oliviaedginton.com

ABOVE When asked what's next, Olivia says, "More rugs! I've been doing commissions non-stop for the past year and a half, so I'm slowing down on those for a little bit to make some new works and experiment with some new designs. In taking on fewer commissions with longer turnaround times, I'm being honest with myself about how much I can get done in a work week. When I first started doing rug commissions, it felt like my personal life and work time all blurred into one, and we all know the inability to separate the two gets messy quickly! Easing up on my workload has had a productive effect in the long run."