



# in.cube8r

isy had a dream...and in.cube8r was born!

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## the concept is this...

- Artists can rent out a glass cube, 2D partition, wall space, shelves or clothes rack for a 3 month period but can change their stock over regularly
- Rents start @ \$21.00 per week and are paid monthly; we then pay the artist monthly for what has sold in the store
- The artist benefits from the retail selling price they set as they pocket 100%, we take no commission!
- Insurance etc is all included in the rental price, just GST is extra and an enrolment fee
- The onus is on the artist to fill and decorate that space. This principle supports my belief around self responsibility and creates a challenge for the artists to keep their space happy and varied
- We have purpose built real time software, which all the artists can log into and edit their stock info, see sales, print invoices from etc.
- We each have up to 90 participants working in every medium from: glass to textiles, clay to 2D prints, metal to home made skin care.





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and gave talks at some of the local art schools and my old uni along with the surveys.

On July 12, 2007 in.cube8r opened its doors to the public with 9 cube holders.

I think I got close to barred from Etsy and other craft websites for 'spamming' people with a shop that didn't exist!

I was amazed by the feedback and by people's trust. My first cube holder sent a box of her beautiful silver jewellery from Tassie to someone whom she'd never met and to a shop that hadn't even opened its doors.

I had to explain to every customer why the shop was so empty and that I was trying a different type of business model.

I lost 10 kilo's in the weeks before and during opening. It felt like such a huge risk to take on something so different with no proven track record. It felt like jumping out of a plane without a chute.

If it hadn't been for my partner taking the back half of the gallery and sharing the lease, I think I would have been too scared.

But the jump paid off and within 7 weeks we were full and have stayed that way ever since.

Also, about 60% of people who were with us from the beginning are still here, which speaks volumes to me about my intention for this space and the reality of what it has become.



## how it all began...

It's been an accumulative journey, I was part of a small central Auckland co-op called The Fish Tank in 1990.

We were 4 young women in our early 20's taking turns running the shop downstairs and painting our stock upstairs. We mainly made hand painted t-shirts and bags.

*I've always made things and taken part in many craft and art courses.*

I went to Monash in 2000 to follow my love of fine art and completed an applied arts degree with a glass blowing major. I followed this with a Dip Ed in secondary arts teaching. This helped me in terms of structure and organization.

In 2007, I saw a flyer for NEIS (New Enterprise Incentive Scheme), NEIS is a program for unemployed people with a viable business idea.

They run an intensive 5 week program, which covers everything from business taxation to signing a lease, employing staff and most

importantly: where to begin and how to break it down. Without them I would not have had the courage or the know-how of starting a business and I can't speak highly enough of them. They also gave me a mentor, who followed the progress of my business throughout the whole first year, and it's all free!

NEIS helped me put together a 50 page business plan through which I got taken seriously and received funding. Part of the course was also to conduct 100 market research surveys, so I had a fair idea that the concept might work. I went

*i'm always making something. i recently shared my journey on our blog, <http://www.incube8r.com.au/2011/04/13/what-i-do-by-isy-fitzroy/>*



*I've started glass blowing again in the last year to attain more balance and re connect with the purpose of the dream...*

It's the reason I started in.cube8r. When a project is really big it's easy to drop what is most dear to you. I've realised just how important it is to always stay in touch with the essence of what it is that set the spark to begin with or burn out sets in.

### in.cube8r participants...

We have around 90 participants at each in.cube8r, so the selection is second to none on the one gallery floor. We carry everything from sculpture to prints to garments to accessories and beyond.

*it's a totally non-elitist approach, anyone can have a go. anyone who makes anything.*

All we look for is that it's not straight out component assembly, there has to be at least 50% handmade input and we keep it varied, so no 2 people working in the same way. Also we have a limit on how much jewellery we carry so sometimes people go onto the waiting list.



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### typical day...

It's different every day...I'm at home with paperwork 2-3 days a week and at the gallery 3 days... before I get to work I have 8 animals to sort out for the day, then I drive 40 minutes down from the Dandenong Ranges into Fitzroy.

My main focus is serving customers and participants but the thing that I seem to spend the most time on is answering emails.

...and very often I buy things for myself from in.cube8r :)

### there were 4 big parts to this dream which have been realized through in.cube8r...

- 1 The main part of this dream was to create a space where artists didn't have to pay any commission on their work and that the price would be of their choosing.
- 2 Secondly, to give the artists power over their display and location of display. When you take your work into a shop or gallery, usually there is no say in how it is displayed or next to whom.
- 3 Thirdly, to have an interactive space. Artists can come in, change their display, try new ideas/products and also be an active part of the gallery. Recently we had a lady spend the weekend spinning her wool on site and we've had a few people running workshops. I'm open to any suggestions.
- 4 Lastly, I wanted a non elitist space. I wanted anyone who made anything to have the freedom to display their wares in a public space.

### creations in cubes...

1. Toby E Designs
2. Jaslyn Art
3. Jackie Cooper Photography
4. Almond Tree Frames
5. Sakki Design
6. Road Worx



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## what inspired in.cube8r...

In my last year at Monash we were asked to take our work around galleries. When I realised that in some cases up to 110% (including GST) would be taken on my pieces I thought, "there has to be a different way." It grew a drive really, I saw a niche market and need for choice in the retail sector and I wanted to support handmade.

Commission, wholesale and consignment was all there was to choose from and lots of people can't do markets for many different reasons.

At the time there was NOTHING else like it and we are still unique, we fill a massive gap in the market and it's HIGHLY viable to be a part of us.

In terms of product; everything is handmade, one-off, unique and proudly Australian.

In terms of the market; at any regular gallery/retail space artists have little to no say about where or how their independent handmade items are placed or whose work they are displayed next to and they have a commission taken against their work, we don't. I wanted to give some power back.

At in.cube8r, not only do artists get to choose where their items are displayed (from 24/7 window visibility to a basic \$21.00 cube with GST) they also get to display everything themselves in their very own 40x40cm glass cubicle, or wall space (clothes rack, 2D board) exactly the way they want it to look!!

In terms of sales; customers love the concept, they come back for every birthday, anniversary, wedding, because they know that their gift can't be found else where and that 100% of what they buy gets paid back to the creator.

## lessons learned...

I learn something new every day! this has been HUGE, in fact, had anyone told me how huge I'd have been way too terrified to do it.

I came from a nanny/kinder/childcare background, I had zero business knowledge! I have the Fitzroy in.cube8r, my 90 participants plus 3 franchisees and family and a farm!!

I'm forever humbled and learning to practice gratitude daily.

## networking & support...

NEIS got me started, like I said; I can't recommend them highly enough. We have now been nominated for NEIS business of the year in different categories 4 years in a row.

I go to a lot of network events, business breakfasts, franchise and CEO meetings and I have a mentor. I'm also currently forming my own board.



## future plans...

I franchised the concept last year, I was getting so many emails from all over Australia and NZ saying, "We need an in.cube8r in Perth, Sydney...", Franchising seemed the perfect option.

I have my hands full, but I can share the love by creating a franchise package. We have refined it down to such a fine art, it's as easy as plug-in-and-go with purpose built software which the artists can log into, anyone with good organizational skills, an appreciation for the arts can have their own in.cube8r.

We are looking for the 'right' people to represent us well and are currently looking to have one or two in every state.

Brisbane and Sydney are doing very well and we have a 4th in.cube8r setting up in Geelong.

We are looking for more people with a good business mind, great at organizing and an appreciation of all things handmade.

## secrets of success

- NEVER give up
- always perfect
- pat yourself on the back often and surround yourself with pets and friends

You can find in.cube8r at...

**fitzroy** VIC

321 smith street, fitzroy

**mosman** NSW

shop 7, 3-5 myahgah mews, mosman

**the valley** QLD

368 brunswick street, fortitude valley

and opening October 12,

**geelong** VIC

127 Moorabool St, Geelong

[www.incube8r.com.au](http://www.incube8r.com.au)

