

The big picture

Could a whole new way of looking at life alter how you invest? Barbara-Ann King hosted an all-female masterclass with charismatic artist **Tess Barnes** to see just how much a viewpoint can change...

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Tess Barnes is a force of nature, a lively extrovert with blonde-pink hair and a beaming smile. Her portraits, too, achieve a warm and vibrant intimacy. Barnes has exhibited widely, has twice been selected for the BP Portrait Award at the National Portrait Gallery, is a fellow of the Royal Society of Arts and has just completed a year as Artist in Residence at the Royal Institution. But perhaps she's most noteworthy for her Women of Substance collection: 50 portraits of high achieving women, which has toured the country and been published.

But Tess recently had a more intriguing collaboration with Barclays Wealth: a self-portraiture workshop at the Royal Institution. This was designed to shed light on women's relationship with money. "Even highly

successful women can be anxious about managing money, to the extent that they refuse to take risks; and this prevents them making the most of their finances," says Emily Haisley, Barclays Wealth behavioural finance expert who introduced the masterclass: "Women have less confidence in their financial expertise than men – but if they can get beyond their fear, they're often better at investing because they take a more long-term view. Of course, you should remember that investments can fall in value, and you may get back less than you invested."

How can we sidestep that anxiety and see our relationship with money in a new light? One way might be to tackle something else we're not that confident about – and to discover that the barriers to success are largely in our mind.



"Doing something outside your comfort zone helps you switch gears"

Better still, if that thing happened to be self-portraiture, it would mean we'd have to look at ourselves in a way we never had before...

THE PORTRAIT CLASS

"Before the class, we talked about the fact that so many women don't appreciate what they can actually do," says Tess. "True enough, every woman walked in and said, I can't draw, I draw stick people!"

The afternoon was not only very enjoyable, says Tess, it also produced these helpful insights.

Really look at yourself

1 "I got people to look hard at their own eye. They were shocked at how different it was to what they assumed – and they're putting on mascara every day, so you'd think they'd know!"

"Emily discussed the financial personality assessments she'd recently done around character and how we look at money. She admitted to general amusement how surprised she was at what she found out about her own underlying attitude to investing and finance. She pointed out that often we prefer not to acknowledge certain things about ourselves, and that we even assume we're the opposite; that we're adventurous



and go-getting with money, when in fact we feel awkward moving forward. Emily talked about how important it is to acknowledge the psychological biases that might stop you progressing.

"It might seem trite, but everyone was surprised by the pictures they'd drawn. They were amazed at the things they hadn't noticed about themselves."

2 Confidence begets confidence

"Drawing was something the women had very little confidence about – in fact, no confidence! – but they learned that actually they *could* draw an eye that really looked like a human eye, and had a twinkle. At the end of the session everyone fed back on each other's



work, and they were all delighted with each other's responses. They'd all assumed drawing was not their area of expertise, that for them it just wasn't possible. But once you try something like that, the confidence it gives you always spills into other areas."

3 Change your perspective

"Doing something outside your normal comfort zone can help you switch gears and find new ways of working. Most of the Women of Substance I painted had tackled something in which they had no previous experience, and it changed the way they viewed the world.

"For example, financier Caroline Hamilton led an all-woman expedition to the North and South Poles. When she came back, she decided to strike out on her own and launched Icebreaker Management Services, which brings together investors, entrepreneurs and creative talent."

In the end, it's crucial to take an honest look at yourself – and your relationship with money. Facing into this may feel as challenging as, say, drawing yourself; but, unless you try, you'll never know just how successful you can be.