



IN THE STUDIO WITH

ROSE BLAKE

SIR PETER BLAKE'S ILLUSTRATOR DAUGHTER OPENS THE DOORS TO HER SHARED EAST LONDON WORKSPACE AS SHE PREPARES FOR A FIRST SOLO EXHIBITION. WORDS AND PHOTOS: STEVE PILL

What's the concept behind your first exhibition, *Now I Am An Artist*?

I'm a jobbing illustrator and I was quite scared – I've been in group shows but I've never had a full gallery to play with before. I came up with this idea of drawing my own galleries on paper and creating works within them. It was a way of making work that I felt comfortable with.

How did you make the artworks?

I drew the galleries and sent them out to a digital printer to make fine art giclée prints. I then hand-finished each print with collage and paint.

I spotted some unusual tins of paint in your studio. What do you use them for?

It's called 1 Shot. It's sign-writer's paint – enamel paint, basically. It's got a really glossy finish to it and the colours are so beautiful. It's nice on the prints because it is so different to the flatness of the paper.

How did you get started in illustration?

I did a foundation at Kingston, not really knowing what I wanted to do. I just remember having a tutorial and one of the tutors basically saying: "You're an illustrator". It suited me, all the problem solving and making something that is easily understandable to someone.

What commissions did you do to begin with?

I started off doing really bad business and financial magazines, stuff like that. I was really depressed about it. A friend gave me the email address of the art director of the *Opinion* pages of the *New York Times*. I cold-emailed him and he gave me a job the next day. Once I had that on my client list, I just got way more work.

What's the strangest commission you've received?

It was for a Japanese toilet company. I got this email

MY STRANGEST JOB? ILLUSTRATING A MANUAL FOR A JAPANESE TOILET

addressed to 'Mr Rose Blake' saying they'd like me to be the illustrator for a toilet called the Washlet. It cleans you after you've used it and they wanted me to draw a frog showing you how to use the toilet for the manual. I turned around to the studio to see if someone had sent it as a joke!

Despite having a famous artist father, you seem to have very much done things on your own terms. Was that a conscious decision?

I don't want to live off his reputation. I think about it every day, it's obviously very present, but I've never gone to an art director and said, "This is my dad, can you hire me?" I love him and he's helped me so much through his mind and being my dad, but I would never try and get work off the back of that link.

Do you chat about art a lot at home?

Not really. Dad will show me what he has been working on and he'll want to know what I've been working on, but we're more likely to talk about *The Archers*.

Did your parents encourage your artistic side early on?

They just let me get on with it. I was always adamant that I wasn't going to get into the arts, but my dad always thought that I would even when I said that I wouldn't. When I was younger, they'd take me to shows all the time so I'd just happen to see these amazing things.

What are you like in the studio?

I'm really boring. I get to the studio early and I work through. I'll have a 20-minute lunch break but I am pretty focused all the time. My studio is really quiet today but there are 10 of us in there normally so it can be really noisy. You have to just put headphones on and get into the groove.

Would you ever consider a space of your own?

I really like having people around, especially the people I share with. It has been really hard doing the show in this space though. I can't really have work out all the time and I've had to apologise for taking up lots of space. I would like a dedicated studio for that.

What's next for you?

I am doing a children's book with Wide Eyed Editions. I'll be starting work on that as soon as the private view is finished. I've also had an idea for the next show as well. I've got a big list of all the ideas I want to do. Rose's exhibition, *Now I Am An Artist*, runs from 7-31 October at Rebecca Hossack Art Gallery, Charlotte Street, London W1. www.iamroseblake.com