

Rose Blake

Words *Kirk Truman*

Portraits *Catherine Hyland*

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Though I may not quite count myself as an artist, I would count myself an admirer of anybody courageous enough to pursue their creative endeavours deep into the trees. An illustrator and artist, the work of this talented creative challenges the notion that these two practices must indeed be kept separate; that an illustration cannot resonate with meaning once parted from its text accompaniment, in the same way that a painting can stand alone. Now, under the guise of the Rebecca Hossack Gallery, Rose Blake has come to have her first solo exhibition.

As a youngster, Rose was born into and raised within a creative environment which progressively developed her own desire for art and creative expression, namely illustration. “My mum and dad are both artists so I was really surrounded by it as a kid. Then I was lucky enough to have a few really inspiring art teachers at school (especially at sixth form), so it just went from there really” she says. The daughter of the renown artist English pop artist Sir Peter Blake (creator of the infamous album sleeve art for the Beatles’ Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band), Rose was soon to progress her interest in art and continue her family trend, studying Illustrator and Animation at Kingston University. At Kingston, Rose was awarded the D&AD Best New Blood Award. She followed this with an MA at the Royal College of Art. Soon after her studies, she began to complete commissions for papers such as The New York Times, The Telegraph & The BBC. “It was just the natural progression after I graduated. The more and more editorial stuff you do the better your clients get” she says, “when I first graduated I was mainly working on in-house business magazines illustrating boring articles about stocks and shares!”



In this debut, Rose has chosen to focus in on the subject of vast museum-scapes. “I had made a few of these drawings previously, and when I showed them to Rebecca she was really into them, and we decided together that they would make a cool show” she says. In the series, Blake captures the busy hum of a gallery concourse and narrative of day-to-day lives. A couple exchanging flowers, a children tottering along hand-in-hand with their parents, a droopy teddy is almost lost in the movement, and a yoga-loving bystander is entertained by a giddy cluster of school children with matching rucksacks; Blake’s series captivates the characteristics of the happenings in life that often go by unnoticed. “I’m really interested in observing people around me” she says, “when I go to an exhibition I’m almost as interested in the people looking around as in the work itself. I keep a little sketchbook on me so I can remember day to day narratives that I see around me.”

In her work, each digitally-designed character contributes to the rich narrative the scene develops, all with their own lives and personalities. And the art on the wall, which Blake hand-paints onto the image, breathes its own history. In a meta-artistic fashion, her imagined museums become playful forums in which to redefine what is regarded as ‘exhibition-worthy’. “I decided to create these gallery scenes and make smaller scale work within them” she says, “its basically lots of shows within a show.” Illustration as art is affirmed, and truly celebrated.

A few years ago, Rose first came to meet gallerist Rebecca Hossack at an opening. Soon after the two first met at the opening, they arranged a meeting to discuss Rose’s work, following which Rebecca & Rose soon began



to make preparations for an exhibition. "I'm not really used to exhibiting my work in galleries" explains Rose, "my work is normally for print/editorial so now it feels really exposed to me." The exhibition, aptly entitled 'Now I Am An Artist', takes its title from Blake's the fact that this is her debut show, and being somewhat nervous in having her first solo exhibition.

In putting together the exhibition, Rose's commissions were on hold for a month, though now she is back to work. "I've got a few things lined up. I'm doing a little collaboration with Heals, and I'm working on two book proposals, a children's book and a cook book!" says Rose. The future of her work is focal on commissions and preparing work for exhibitions - there is talk of exhibiting her work at the New York, Mott Street, Rebecca Hossack Gallery in the new year. An exhibition that Rose expresses to have many more ideas for. "I'd love to be able to keep a balance of doing illustration work, and making work for shows. It's nice to have the contrast of really quick paced editorials, while being able to work a lot more freely on my exhibition work. I've had so much fun making the work for this one" she says. And truly, now Rose Blake is an artist. ■

