



above  
Selfie Garden  
Monotype  
42 x 61"  
2015

## ROSE BLAKE

### NOW SHE IS AN ARTIST

**ROSE BLAKE'S ART ABOUT PEOPLE LOOKING AT ART** stopped us in our tracks at last year's Miami Project Fair. Her very meta series, *Now I am An Artist*, is aptly name for one who normally works as an illustrator, but recently dipped a toe into the world of white walls. Setting illustration aside for a bit, she took a chance on sharing her inside voice, and the result is quite lovely and successful. Rose Blake thoughtfully explores the concept that the act of viewing art is a creative community practice in itself. She's clearly been an artist all along.

**Juxtapoz:** Tell us about your *Now I am an Artist* exhibition. How did the idea come up, and did you enjoy painting your first gallery full of people so much that you wanted to make a whole series?

**Rose Blake:** I was offered a solo show at Rebecca Hossack gallery, and was really daunted by the idea of showing my work in a gallery, as I normally only work on illustrations for print and had never had a show before. It's quite a tough job to show illustration in its best light in a fine art setting, so I decided to make lots of smaller galleries within the pictures. In a way, it was lots of little shows within a show.

**What was the process for these monotypes?**

They start as a digital drawing. I then get them printed with an amazing printer, and I finish by hand with collage, ink or paint. So all the artworks hanging in the gallery scenes are actually handmade on top of the print.

**The work has a different context in a home versus a gallery or art fair. It's funny to think about people looking at your art about people looking at art.**

Rebecca has been showing them at lots of fairs and told me that they've been going down well in that setting. She showed some in Miami and said that people seemed to really connect with them in that context, which is funny because when I was making them, I didn't think of them being shown at fairs, really.

**The white space and scale of a museum has a big impact, which your work really captures. Were you were particularly conscious of those elements when making this series?**

Definitely. I really wanted to concentrate on keeping the pictures airy and uncluttered whilst also including lots of little details and mini stories within them.



above (from left)  
The Engagement  
Monotype  
30 x 34"  
2015

School Trip  
Monotype  
30 x 34"  
2015

**How did your own experience in galleries and museums influence this work? Were the pieces inspired by any specific locations?**

Some of them are, and some of them are completely made up. The *Blue Sunday* picture is loosely based on MOMA, and the two pink pictures are based on last year's *Summer Exhibition* at the Royal Academy of Arts in London. I'm always really interested in looking at the people looking at the work when I go and see a show too.

**Who were some of the artists you paid tribute to, and were some of the others artworks by imagined artists? We noticed those Calder mobiles.**

It's a mixture of both. There is Calder, Ellsworth Kelly, and Joe Tilson in there. A few of them have a Matisse vibe, and the rest of the artworks that are hand finished on the prints are made up by me.

**Will you continue this series?**

For sure. I'm about to start working on a new series for a show in New York later this year.

**Do you plan the color stories, or do you work more intuitively?**

I work pretty intuitively. I normally have an idea of what the color will be like, and then just go with the flow.

**You went to the Royal Academy of Art, which we understand is a PBD (pretty big deal) in the UK. What did you learn from your MA program that affected your work?**

I actually struggled quite a lot on my MA. I feel I learned far more on my BA, which was at Kingston. My MA was called Communication Art + Design and was very multi-disciplinary, with graphic designers, illustrators and filmmakers. I suppose the main thing I learned was the importance of collaboration and talking to others about your work. I made loads of great friends there!

**Do you find the lines between art, illustration and design frustrating in any way?**

Yes. I suppose, traditionally and hierarchically, us illustrators are at the bottom of the pile. I generally spend most of my time freelancing, and it's often really hard to find a second to think about your own voice, as you're constantly working on different overlapping deadlines. Personally, with this series, I really needed to take some time and actually try to make a solid body of work.

**What did you learn from the process that might influence your future work?**

To work bigger! The works in the show are mostly about 150x100cm. Normally, when I'm working on commissions, I work at about 15x10cm. Also, to slow down and think of



things in more of a long-term way. After doing the show, I'm less nervous about giving myself longer blocks of time to work on bigger, more extended projects.

**Tell me about the little people you paint. Do you connect with each one as a personality?**

When you look into the pictures, there are lots of little stories within the people. For example in *Three Fingers/The Stolen Daffodil* there is a group of school children, all doing different things (eating crisps, playing cat's cradle, showing off with yo-yo tricks, reading and playing on their phone). One of the boys is giving a girl a daffodil, and when you look at the other side of the picture, you see that he has stolen it from a man who is giving a bunch to a girl. I really enjoy drawing all these little interlinked stories within the picture.

**Your characters are so stylish. Do you find inspiration from people you see on the street?**

Yes. A lot of my pictures have real people in them. My friends are in the pictures too. I look at a lot of style blogs, and am always on the lookout for an interesting outfit on the street. I take little notes on my phone when I see someone interesting,

like, "boy in dinosaur T-shirt—diplodocus," and "peace sign on the back of jacket," to remind me to put them in a drawing. Also, I share a flat with a fashion designer, so I suppose it is something that I'm unintentionally quite aware of too.

**Are you told that you look like the people in your drawings, and if so, how do you feel about that?**

All the time. I don't mind at all. I've actually put myself in a few of the pictures, which some people found quite funny. There's one where I'm looking out of the picture waving at you looking at it.

**What do you like to communicate most through your work? There is a sense of joy and community.**

I'm really pleased that you say that, as that is definitely a huge part of it! Also they are about the enjoyment of art and the fact that it can make you feel really good.

JUX

[iamroseblake.com](http://iamroseblake.com)

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*Three Fingers /  
The Stolen Daffodil*  
Monotype  
42 x 60"  
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