

‘IT WAS SO STRUCTURED AND FLAT, I WANTED TO MAKE IT COME OUT AT YOU’

SINCE working at ROAR I have seen many incredible pieces of artwork and had the privilege of meeting some highly creative people. I have been spoilt by creativity.

However when I first saw Tracy White's artwork here in the ROAR office, I was genuinely taken back by the originality of her animated videos. I wanted to know more so I grabbed half an hour of her time to ask her some questions.

Like many artists the creative embers have been burning since she was a child, from colouring in the patterns and pictures her Dad used to draw for her, to going on to create her own patterns.

Tracy ended up taking a Higher National Diploma in Graphic Design and Visual Communications, something which has aided her work ever since: "The graphics design did help me because I can design my own leaflets and do photography."

Really embracing her creative side during this time she did some work for Divine, the transvestite not the chocolate brand she clarifies. She also did some work for Marc Almond from Soft Cell: "I was a big fan of Marc's and I used to write to him and go see him. I used to send him paintings, weird paintings of people and himself."

After college Tracy's work took some different turns. She tells she went back to practising karate, casually dropping in that she not only taught the martial art but also ended up competing abroad.

She also had a job as a shop assistant for a time, but it is clear that the creative side of her never diminished.

She reveals: "I was still doing portraits when I was working and then I wanted to start doing stained glass."

After taking up an evening course she tells me of her frustrations with this particular medium: "It was so structured and flat, I wanted to make it come out at you."

Working on this instinct she ended up layering the glass using metal and imprinted some of her paintings into it. Even after this process the "flatness" of the

artwork was a bugbear: "I had this idea, I'm going to make a glass chair!"

Chase correspondent **AMY FORDE**, marketing and communications assistant at Rotherham Open Arts Renaissance (ROAR), talks to artist Tracy White.

Experimenting again with different ways to make this chair she ended up using an old coffee table, cutting some wood out to make a back. She states: "It looked like Wuthering Heights."

Tracy ended up going on to teach herself how to diffuse glass, using this skill to make her own jewellery. It was during this time that her artistic life took a recognisable turn as she started volunteering at Renishaw Hall in

Derbyshire. She got to know Sir Resesby and Lady Sitwell well and they supported her in creating her first exhibition, as well as buying one of her paintings. As she got to know them better, she also started selling her jewellery in their shop, later becoming their resident artist in 2011.

She eventually set up a studio at Renishaw Hall, teaching workshops and getting involved with Open Up Sheffield.

It was on this footing that she progressed: "I started doing work being self employed for different companies working

with learning disabilities. I just found it really good, you know changing people's lives through them being creative. Being creative can help people so much with communication as well."

Deciding to give up her studio at Renishaw, she started running groups of up to 15 people with learning disabilities, from helping participants create artwork using different crafts, to organising sponsored walks which she utilised to help fund the sessions.

Although enjoyable, she tells me there was a lot of pressure in running these groups and she decided that at the time it was too much for her.

Caring for her mother, Tracy decided to go back to focusing on her artwork: "It's gone back to what I used to do at college, dot and line work."

Although, as is typical of Tracy's need to develop her work, she started playing around with these drawings, making them move with different software: "I started to build these characters up, and then made things happen to them by making them move and adding music and sound effects."

She uses garage band music to create scores to accompany these pieces and add quirky sound effects. She also started using her old paintings and drawings to back-drop these video animations.

I ask her where her inspiration comes from and she elaborates: "A picture is boring, isn't it? Like a piece of stained glass is boring. But if you add to it and make it come out it's like an extension of it."

She adds that she would eventually like to bring more words into her videos.

Her illustration and animation is on display in ROAR's Buzz Gallery until March 8 and so I ended by asking her if being involved in the organisation has helped in her practice.

She says: "Yeah, seeing other people work at ROAR you get other ideas because you are not stuck in one environment."

She admits that before she felt quite isolated, saying that she needed somewhere other than her home to come and create art.

You can see some of Tracy's work and keep up to date with her via her website www.tracywhiteartist.co.uk.

