

QUIRKY CREATIONS



From her studio in King's Heath, South Birmingham, Ruth Green creates colourful bold prints using bright shades and quirky animal characters. Jennie Musgrove caught up with the designer to find out more about her background, inspirations and ambitions.

WHAT IS YOUR BACKGROUND?

I was born and brought up in the Midlands, and did my initial Foundation training at Bournville College in Birmingham. I studied printed textiles at Liverpool John Moore's University, followed by a Masters, also in print, at the University of Central England in Birmingham.

HOW DID YOU BEGIN YOUR CAREER?

After I left university in 1994, I worked part time at Walsall Art Gallery as a gallery assistant. At the same time, I began freelancing as a surface pattern designer, working for a couple of London based agencies. They would take the designs to trade shows around the world.

We moved to King's Heath in 1997, I gave up the gallery work and concentrated full-time on freelancing. I set up a small studio in the spare bedroom, and designed for greetings cards, wrapping paper and fashion and home textiles. Towards the end of the 90s a couple of my agents closed down their businesses. I struggled for a while, trying to decide whether I could maintain an income from designing. Things turned a corner when I got a grant from the Arts Council in 2003. This enabled me to buy a small printing press, and take some time to develop a new portfolio. I started showing my new work at art fairs, meeting the public and hearing first hand what they thought of my work.

HOW DID YOU DEVELOP YOUR STYLE?

After I finished freelancing, I was producing quite a variety of work. A lot of it was abstract, building up layers of colour using simple forms. I found this satisfying at first, but struggled to move it forward. I'd done a lot of screen-printing at college, and decided to buy the basics so I could print at home. There was no looking back, and I was completely taken with the process of making prints. I had often included characters and animals in my design work, so I started to introduce these to my new prints.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU?

A lot of the compositions that appear in my prints are inspired by the British countryside. The local park where I walk my dog every day, seems to provide me with a lot of ideas. I love gardening and have an allotment, and both of these provide good thinking time and lots of inspiration.

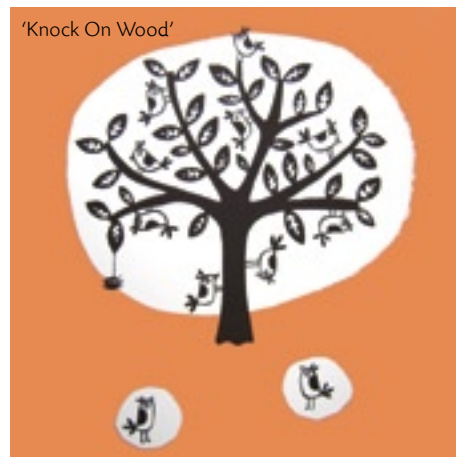


'Acorn Surprise'

"ORLA KIELY SHOOK MY HAND AND SAID THAT SHE LIKED MY WORK. I'M SUCH A BIG FAN OF HER DESIGNS, I COULD BARELY SPEAK TO SAY THANK YOU!"



'Pear'



'Knock On Wood'



'Early Bird'

I love mid-century design and have an increasing collection of ceramics and textiles from the 60s and 70s. There is something about the strong colours and sometimes over-the-top designs that I find irresistible!

HOW WOULD YOU MOST LIKE YOUR WORK TO BE ENJOYED?

I love to see where people hang my prints, and occasionally I'm lucky enough to deliver the work in person and see the print in its new home. It gives each piece a whole new character when it's in the context of someone else's house.

ARE YOU INFLUENCED BY ANY ARTISTS IN PARTICULAR?

There are a lot of artists and illustrators that I really admire. Angie Lewin, Sanna Annukka, Mark Heard and Rob Ryan, all make work that turns my knees to jelly! I love work by current illustrators such as Marc Boutavant, Tim Biskup and Pete Fowler.

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO CREATE EACH PRINT?

The longest part of the process is the initial drawing. Depending on the size of the image, this can take up to a week to get right. Once the screen is prepared, it takes a day to make a small edition.

WHAT IS YOUR PROUDEST ARTISTIC ACHIEVEMENT?

Orla Kiely shook my hand and said that she liked my work. I'm such a big fan of her designs, I could barely speak to say thank you!

WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS FOR THE FUTURE?

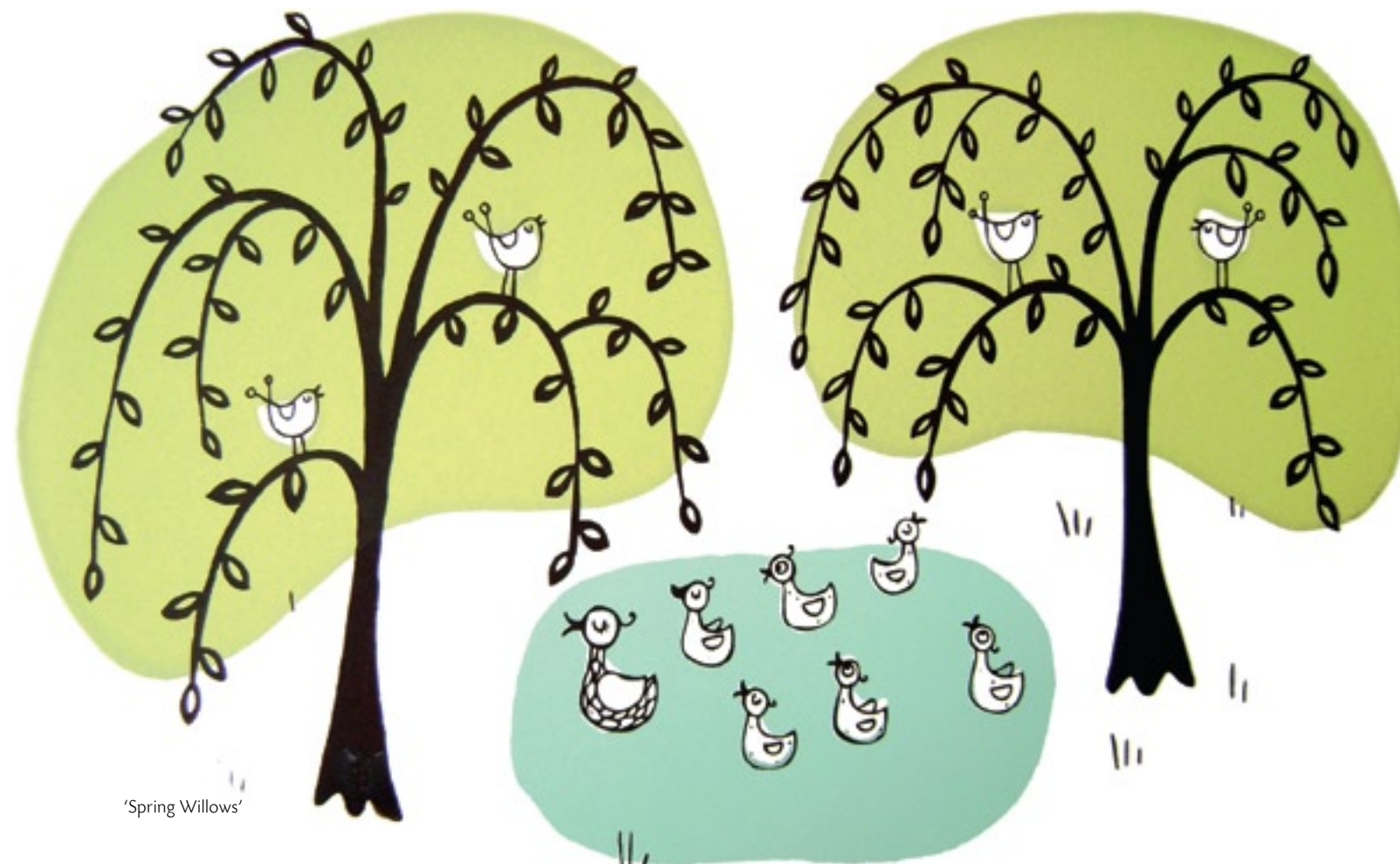
I've got a children's book up my sleeve which I'll be working on for a good proportion of this year. My partner and I have recently moved house, and we're currently building a new studio in the loft – I can't wait to move into it! ■

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You can see Ruth's work at the Reading Contemporary Art Fair from 23rd to 25th April, and at 'Printfest' in Ulverston from 30th April to 2nd May. Visit: www.readingcontemporarycraftfair.co.uk and www.printfest.org.uk.

Ruth's prints are available to buy from a number of outlets, including her website, www.ruthgreendesign.com

They are also available in: Bellwood and Wright, Lancaster, www.bellwoodandwrightfineart.co.uk. The Craft Centre and Design Gallery at the City Gallery, Leeds, www.craftcentreleeds.co.uk. Hus and Hem in Ledbury, www.husandhem.co.uk



'Spring Willows'