



## ‘What you take for granted, other people might see as a skill’

**Holly-Anne Rolfe, 29, illustrator.** Holly-Anne lives in Esher, Surrey, and works in brand development. In her spare time she runs her own business as an illustrator, Holly's Houses ([hollyshouses.co.uk](http://hollyshouses.co.uk))

Life means you have to earn money, which can sometimes mean limiting yourself in order to be able to work with others.

Creativity is about having the confidence to do your own thing. That's really important to me and it's what I've been concentrating on over the past few years.

Doing my illustrations on the side has given me a lot more confidence in my day job; I've felt able to take on new projects. Having something else of your own also gives you a sort of recklessness and a 'Why not?' approach to your day job. It invigorates you. When you've

done something for yourself that works, it is easier to look at yourself and say, 'Yes, my ideas are worthy.' I feel more able to shout about what I think I can do.

I had been doing sketches of people's houses for a long time as a hobby. As a child, drawing houses was always the thing I was best at. I started doing illustrations of holiday homes and found people wanted them to give as presents. It just grew from there.

When you can draw, you take it for granted – for me it's just a sketch, but other people see real value in it.

Part of you can feel repressed if you can't pursue your ideas. I've always found it easy to do too many things and not do them as well as I'd like. It's so satisfying when you're focusing on one creative task that is right for you.

## Five steps to get started

### ● Get rid of your hang-ups

'Transform your hang-ups,' says Julia Cameron, America's high-priestess of creativity and author of *The Artist's Way* (Jeremy Tarcher). 'Think of five secrets that still trouble you then write about one. Perhaps one of your teachers humiliated you by saying you were no good at anything. Get revenge by writing about it or painting something inspired by the experience.'

### ● Stop self-censoring

We learn to be critical of our own ideas at an early age, which helps us to learn, but can block our creative impulses. Cameron suggests writing at least three pages every day about how you're feeling and then putting them aside for eight weeks. Returning to them much later may reveal preoccupations you might not normally admit to – this is useful fodder for creativity.

### ● Seek inspiration

'Take time to dream,' says Cameron. Once a week, armed with a notebook, spend two hours on your own, somewhere you are fond of – a shop, perhaps, or a museum or library. 'Learn to listen, connect with your instincts and experience things more deeply.' Ask yourself, 'Why is that there? Who designed this? What were they thinking?'

### ● Don't be afraid of repetition

According to Keith Johnston, theatre practitioner and the author of *Impro* (Methuen), the creative process often falters when we try too hard to be original.

Imagine you're asked to list 20 things that are grey – what would you say? A stone, an elephant... then what? 'The boy who tackled this exercise by listing "an elephant standing up, an elephant at a bus stop, an elephant lying down" was the most original, because he saw the value in repetition.'

### ● Don't get discouraged

Be patient. We are all vulnerable, and criticism can be destructive. At first 'don't show anyone what you make and don't talk about it,' advises Cameron. Only let in people you can really trust.