

# Interview: Becka Griffin



**Becka Griffin Illustration**

[www.beckagriffinillustration.co.uk](http://www.beckagriffinillustration.co.uk)

[www.etsy.com/uk/shop/BeckaGriffin](http://www.etsy.com/uk/shop/BeckaGriffin)

Liverpool-based artist Becka Griffin recently turned her part-time illustration business into an exciting new career. Her fun themed alphabets – including biscuits, cheeses and dinosaurs – are hugely popular, and are sold in several brick-and-mortar

shops, as well as online. Becka also gives back to the creative community by sharing her experience in training sessions. She teaches new sellers how to get started on Etsy, and runs more advanced classes to help shop owners improve their sales.

**SIO**

You studied graphic arts and illustration at university – what got you interested in those subjects?

**BECKA**

When I was a little girl, I had a romantic idea of being an artist, but I found I was quite good at illustration rather than fine art. I liked to draw things that had a purpose.

**SIO**

You chose a different career initially, then returned to illustration afterwards. What got you back into art, and made you realise that perhaps it could become more than just a hobby?

**BECKA**

I was helping my little sister with her art homework – it was the first time I'd drawn anything in about eight years, and it made me remember that I could still do it.

Afterwards, I went home and drew the outside of my house just for something to do, and thought "Oh, I can actually do this! It looks all right!" Then people saw it and started asking if I could do theirs, and it went from there. I was working full-time as



well, so it was a little bit of extra money, but since then it's just grown and grown and grown! It's amazing – it wasn't planned in any way.

Sometimes I thought, "It's not good enough – it's just a little drawing." When people are paying proper money for it, it's a bit scary, because it's just me at home doing it.

I don't do the house portraits any more, but I always sold them through my own website rather than Etsy, because you don't want to be paying commission when you're selling things for hundreds of pounds.

**SIO**

Where did you get the inspiration for your alphabet illustrations?

Becca's cheese card was the first item she sold online

**BECKA**

It started when I went to Australia in 2007 to meet my cousins for the first time, and we were playing a game called Scattergories. You have a letter and a list of categories, so you have to think of a girl's name beginning with B, and then you have to find a place beginning with B, and it carries on like that with a list of 10 categories.

It got me thinking in a particular way. I started thinking about alphabets and drawing alphabets.

The first one I did was an animal alphabet, which was okay, and then I did an alphabet of cheeses, and that just really took off. A lady from a local cheese shop got in touch, and she started



stocking little cards with the cheese alphabet on them. They were quite crude at the time – not printed on super-nice card or anything – but it gave me the confidence to say, “Yes, I can try to sell these.”

So I set up my Etsy shop and, funnily enough, the first thing I sold was a cheese alphabet card. I think it was because it was different – it’s not something I’ve ever seen before, an alphabet of cheeses – and that just seems to have brought people in.

Since then, I’ve done alphabets of biscuits, cake – all sorts of different ones. I think I’ve got about 20 at the moment. I’ll take them off and re-draw them after a while, and I’m constantly coming up with new ideas.

Becca now sells around 20 different designs in her store

The success that I’ve had through Etsy seems to have been all about my alphabets.

#### SIO

How did you decide which items you were going to sell, and what to put your illustrations on? You’ve got notebooks and cards, but also some more unusual things such as nail transfers.

#### BECCA

I had a look at what I could make at home, and I was blown away when I found out I could make nail transfers just by getting this special paper that you can put through the printer. You can do temporary tattoos as well. It’s about looking at what you can make at

home, keeping the costs as reasonable as you can for yourself, and passing that on to the customer. My advice would be to try everything, but don’t be scared to pull something if it doesn’t work.

#### SIO

Now you’re doing training to help other people sell their work on Etsy. How did you get into that?

#### BECCA

I’m a member of an arts co-operative based in Liverpool, and we got some lottery funding for some IT training and to help people start small businesses. We were sitting there trying to think of different IT courses that we could run, and one of my colleagues said, “Well, why don’t you show people how to sell on Etsy?”

I was a little apprehensive, but I’d done some training in my previous career, so I thought I’d give it a go. It seems to have gone down really well – all of the courses have been oversubscribed and I’ve got a waiting list at the moment.

I do Etsy for beginners, and an intermediate course for people who are already

selling, but want to sell a bit more. I've also done one-to-one training with people I've met on the craft fair circuit, and I've done a course by email for people as well.

**SIO**

What do you enjoy most about the training?

**BECKA**

Being able to actually see people and speak to people. I can get ideas from it, too. It's really nice to have a personal interaction, and to share best practice. Doing everything online can be a little bit impersonal sometimes, so I think it's important to have that point of contact.

**SIO**

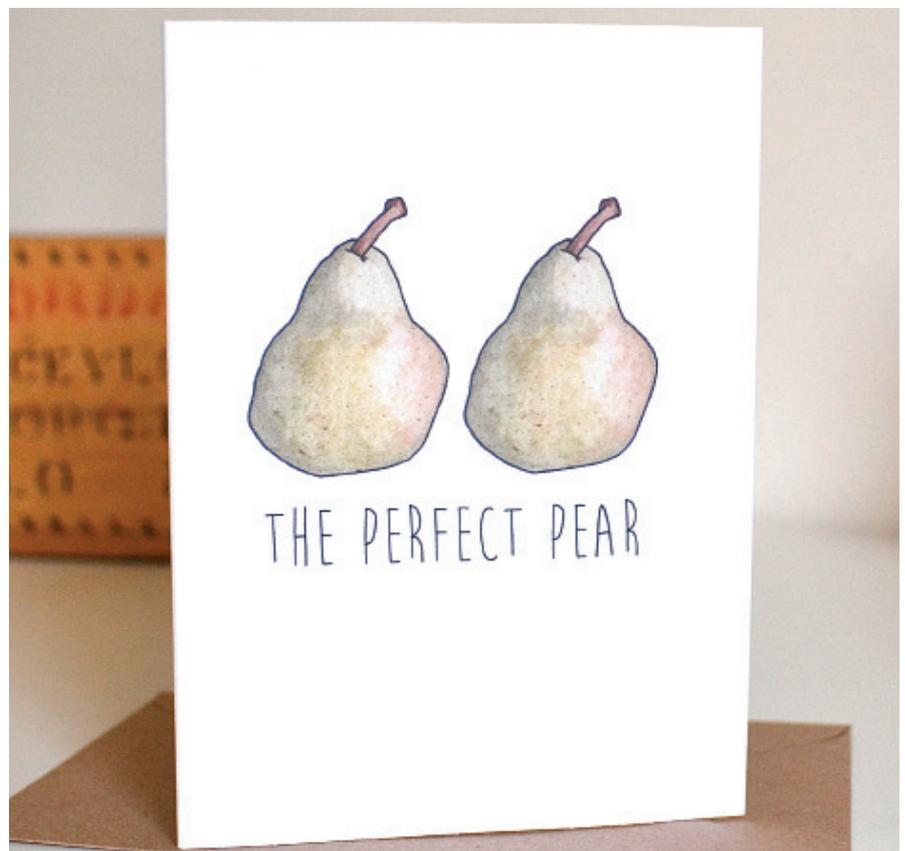
If you could offer new Etsy sellers one piece of advice, what would it be?

**BECKA**

Something I always tell people on the courses is that you've got to give it time. You can't expect to make a fortune overnight. It's a gradual thing, but you're constantly learning different ways of doing things, and you should always take advice from people. ●



All of Becka's cards are printed on high-quality stock, and supplied with smart brown envelopes



Becka offers a 'send direct' service for busy customers - for an extra fee, she will write a card and post it on their behalf