



Jake Stark - Strange Arcade T-shirts

Elaine: Jake, how did you get into producing these absolutely amazing T-shirts?

Jake: It was actually by chance, it is really strange to say that because I'm been doing it for four years now, but I had a small show in a local coffee shop where I could hang some of my work and at the time I'd just finished university and spent my degree working on contemporary fine art, so a complete shift to what I am doing now, lino printing, which I guess is a very elaborate stamp that you press into paper or fabric or whatever else. And it kind of just grew from that.

Elaine: So what equipment do you actually need? Because you were saying you were in a small apartment.

Jake: The main equipment, aside from the lino, is sort of a chisel tool, basically to, to carve out the lino and you're essentially carving away all of the areas that you don't want pressed onto the fabric. It sounds easy but even now I get muddled up because everything is reversed, so if you do text, you have to make sure it is backwards which I still, to this day, forget sometimes.

Elaine: They're very intricate designs, aren't they. I mean I can see, the sort of, a Japanese influence there, sort of like almost Pokemon and then also as you mentioned before, medieval, that its a combination of very detailed design.

Jake: Yeah, I grew up on a lot of eastern culture, and western, and kind of a mix between the two influenced from video games and cartoons and folklore and er, that kind of inspired me to to name, I guess, my brand, as Strange Arcade. It's very difficult to describe what I do because it, it can vary from somewhat cute to very strange and odd, and I just feel like it kind of encompasses everything. And I, I tend to kind of pick and choose different inspirations from different cultures. The many things that I enjoy, one of them is Dungeons and Dragons and some of the monsters and creatures are a great inspiration. A lot of the customers that I have tend to fall into the same category of liking the same sort of stuff that I do and the age range is quite surprising, there are a lot of people that are older than I am and quite a lot that are younger than I am so it's it's kind of nice to be able to connect with people through this, or through what I do to a whole age range. Because I know a lot of the time you kind of worry that you're stifling your customer range, if you're making something that you enjoy but it's only for people roughly around your age that can kind of connect with what you're doing.

Elaine: So you could say basically then, I mean I having bought an amazing t-shirt from you for one of my grandsons, um that each item is individual, they're not, it's not sort of mass produced.

Jake: Yeah, I try to avoid the mass production, even now I'm, I'm kind of moving into having things produced like enamel pins, and badges and lucky coins. But I tend to limit the number of productions just for that sense of there is only so many made rather than having just copious amounts made and continue to sell them. I think it's the, the other good side to that for myself is I'm not relying on making a handful of products and then just leaving it at that, because I'm always working on something new so it's good to know that once I have sold out of something I don't have to worry about it.

Elaine: Where do you market?



Jake: I do most of my sales online at the moment, so I did my course for my Siret number last summer, and then since then I have started to look at different markets that I can kind of fit in, and the Christmas markets are really good because although the stuff that I make is a bit different, it's like yourself, it's often a good chance to get gifts for someone. But market wise, I think going further afield and looking for something that I can kind of fit in with is my next plan.

Elaine: Right. Although your future plan is so, it is expanding your sort of market and ...

Jake: Yeah, so I'm still kind of expanding online at the moment and because I have my finger in many different creative pies at the moment, I'm creating a bit more of a following online so it's trying to keep up with that and keep producing new things at a fairly constant rate to keep people engaged.

Elaine: So, what is the name again of your....

Jake: Strange Arcade.

Elaine: Strange Arcade. Well, proprietor of Strange Arcade, thank you very much.

Jake: Thank you.

Elaine: And I wish you all the very best of luck and may it continue to grow.