

1 slick on the draw

Why Deptford illustrator **Jessica Childs** sees community spirit in a housing developer

Erica Bush

Jessica Childs' affiliation with Deptford has been defining. Initially drawn to the area by friends as a third-year illustration student, the artist has carved out a career in the town.

While working a part-time job at the now-closed Deptford Project Cafe, she began illustrating event flyers and menus for her boss, who also owned a graphic design studio.

Working under her illustrator name Childsdraw, Jessica's linear style fused traditional drawing with digital design and was applied to prints, clothing and ceramics.

Fast forward a few years and the 28-year-old Brockley resident is in the midst of one her most exciting projects to date.

In her first collaboration, Jessica has teamed up with Pocket Living, a London-based developer specialising in what it says are affordable homes for millennials.

Marking the launch of 14 one and two-bedroom homes for sale at its latest development in Deptford's Arklow Road, Jessica has created a limited-edition range of homewares to celebrate the building and the vibrant area that it calls home.

Arklow Road SE14 x Childsdraw,



Jessica Childs' designs have been applied to prints, clothing and ceramics

currently being displayed in the development's show home and available to buy online, comprises a mug, a canvas cushion, a velvet cushion, a tray and a print.

The collection showcases Jessica's signature motifs of palm trees and local buildings alongside inspiration drawn from the former propeller factory in Arklow Road.

"It was exciting when I got approached for the collaboration because they wanted to focus on Deptford and that was definitely the backbone of what inspired my work," said Jessica.

"It was all about getting a good combination of the area and appealing to the people that are hopefully going to be living there.

"Pocket Living very much bear in mind people that have bikes, for example.

"In all of their buildings they always have a massive space for bike storage so in the print we ended up doing a woman cycling away from the Arklow Road building.

"You can also spot a small anchor on her ankle as a little nod to Deptford."

Further cementing its ties to the community, Pocket Living is set to donate £1,000 from sales to the Marsha Phoenix Memorial Trust, a Supported Housing Project for single homeless young women aged 16 to 25, as chosen by Jessica.

"It was quite refreshing for a developer to want to work with local people and not just turn up and be like, 'Right, we're here,'" she said.

"I'm quite proud of the project. I was really pleased that they wanted to offer a

donation to a local, really worthwhile cause.

"That's been the biggest impact that I've had to do within an area, giving back something that's not just art. I wouldn't have been able to do that without working with them."

Connecting art with community is not new for Jessica.

Constantly influenced by her surroundings, her first collection, Costa Del Deptford, a mix of clothing and prints channelling local summer vibes, was inspired by Deptford Market in the warmer months.

"I like drawing and depicting parts of an area and people that aren't often celebrated," said Jessica, who uses freehand, a digital drawing tablet and Adobe Illustrator CC to create her designs.

"Coming from a very small town next to Portsmouth, moving to London was a massive sensory overload.

"There was so much going on and a real mix of people, from those coming from Goldsmiths and more of an academic creative background along with the immigrant side of it. I just love the melting pot of the area.

"Costa Del Deptford came off the back of me and my friends saying it in the summer when everybody's got speaker boxes out and their tops off.

"It was a play on how not glamorous Deptford is, but how it's got its own charm."

Now based in her Peckham studio in Rye Lane, Jessica has begun working on her summer collections and is pursuing more collaborations.

"Peckham has already established itself as a nice, vibrant environment and there's other small independent local brands which I think complement me and vice versa," she said. "I'm definitely hoping to find the same creative inspiration in Peckham as I did in Deptford.

"Peckham's a bit bigger but it has the same juxtaposition of different people."

Prices for the Arklow Road SE14 x Childsdraw collaboration start from £14.

Apartments at the Arklow Road development are still for sale from £450,000.

Go to childsdraw.com and arklowroadse14.com for more details

