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How To Get Into Greetings Cards

The UK greetings card sector may be a very competitive market to break into, but it's also the most successful in the world. Expert designers offer their tips on this alternative source of income.

Starting Out

Scanners, picture editing programmes, and craft products mean it's easy to make up your designs onto greetings cards, and sell via online portals such as Folksy, Etsy, ebay, or on your own websites.

Former Do Crafts Graphic Design Team Leader Erica Martyn says, this method "is a really good route to build up a portfolio of work suitable for the greetings card industry, it also helps to test designs, and how well they are received."

As you build up confidence, you could approach shops directly, and sell at a wholesale price, something which artist Carla Koala found beneficial as she started her career in the industry. Her advice is to do your homework early on; "get to know your markets, and what different companies require from artists. Be professional, and have a portfolio that is laid out sensibly." This portfolio should reflect your own unique style and not be overloaded with old material or duplicates.

Google will also be your friend when researching craft fairs, and the pop-up shop trend has exploded meaning there are plenty of opportunities to sell your work in a retail environment. Craft fairs will typically charge a rental price for their stalls, while pop-ups could charge a commission on sales, a joining fee, or both.

Professional Development

Elizabeth Ryman of Cinnamon Toast Designs is breaking into the industry and has already reaped the benefits of professional development opportunities. She has been a winner and runner-up in several Marks and Spencer's design competitions, and says entering "gave me the opportunity to get my work out there in front of those with expertise, who offered encouragement that my work was good enough."

In a competitive market, any opportunity to present your portfolio should be taken as a valuable one; and feedback should be welcomed. Elizabeth says "It's learning not to fear feedback and advice – what one eye sees is very different to another. It's about being open to new things, and embracing them in a positive light." It's also important you keep updated on current trends in wording, colour etc. in the markets you're trying to break across the world.

Licensing

Licensing your images to greeting card companies is another way to boost your income, career, and portfolio. Some of the leading brands may license artwork from successful artists but there are still companies that expect and welcome new designers. Leading direct selling company Phoenix Trading is one of these. They typically offer a £450 exclusive 3 year license with world rights, with the copyright remaining with the artist. Phoenix artist Carla Koala also notes that "you can still sell the same image over and over again for different usages." With Phoenix Trading also producing gift wrap, tags, and other accessories, you could be paid separate license fees for each type of product. You also have the option of submitting your work to an art agency or licensing agency, who will take a cut of your fee, and they actively promote your work via their website. Your work may be seen by retailers at trade fairs such as 'Progressive Greetings Live', and 'Spring Fair'.

The Craft Market

If you're looking for new opportunities, how about producing artwork that crafters all over the country will use when they make greetings cards? Erica Martyn says this is an option for people who "enjoy creating a wider variety of artwork based around one initial idea." An understanding of craft products, such as rubber stamps, patterned papers, and decoupage can be useful. Work involves black line drawings, or full coloured versions of characters and backgrounds, along with co-ordinating backing papers and other items, so it helps to have an idea of how items are used and put together. Do Crafts and Trimcraft are two well-known names that work with freelance designers on collections like this.

Further Sources Of Information

The [Writers and Artists website](#) has useful tips on preparing a portfolio aimed specifically at the greetings card industry. This sector also has its own trade association, the [GCA](#), and linked magazine [Progressive Greetings](#), both of which are comprehensive sources of information on anything from companies who are looking for freelance artists, to licensing and social media marketing. Finally, for specific advice on protecting copyright, click through to trade organisation [ACID](#) (Anti Copying In Design).