

Plumber Sam taps into an unusual artistic talent

Former plumber Sam Wild is the artist whose work is featured in this month's CHASE magazine. **AMY FORDE**, marketing and communications assistant at Rotherham Open Arts Renaissance (ROAR), went along to meet Sam and tap him up for information about his work.

I was extremely excited to interview ROAR member and studio holder Sam Wild about his work.

Having seen only glimpses of his art, sometimes as I walked past his studio door, sometimes as I put my lunch in the communal fridge, I was very intrigued to find out more about the artist behind the work.

I do enjoy going in artists' studios, not out of sheer nosiness, but I feel they reveal a lot about the artist who works inside — like stepping into the sketchbook of someone's creative mind.

We took a seat in his studio space here at Westgate Chambers and began to chat.

Sam grew up in Sheffield on what he described as a "tough council estate" and, although he has always been creative, he explained that in the place he grew up, "art's not the regular thing, so I felt as if I had to keep it to myself in a weird way".

After leaving school, he trained as a plumber, something he admits was somewhat pushed on to him at school. Realising that it wasn't for him, he went back to college to study art and then on to university, reading for a degree in Fine Art at Manchester Metropolitan University.

I asked Sam about this transition and he said: "I think if people from backgrounds which aren't artistic then go into that environment, there is always a bit of disconnect."

And he clarified this by adding: "You kind of realise you are a bit of an outsider in both worlds."

Although Sam did well at university, like many graduates he found that starting a life outside of it was hard. "When I came out it was totally the wrong time to be looking for work. I had to move back to Sheffield from Manchester which was difficult and I had some mental health problems at that time as well."

A familiar story, and I wondered whether he was still able to be creative in this period. He said that he did some portraits of his family and he and I both gazed upon a portrait of his mum asleep on the sofa — a picture which is now hung on his studio wall.

Sam eventually found full-time work at a

housing association, providing structure and income with which to start building. He was able to re-invest in his creative practice and has been a studio holder at ROAR for more than a year now.

He told me that it had massively improved his work, saying: "I just can't overestimate how it's changed my art because it makes you more ambitious.

"You don't have to worry about any limitations."



As a 'newbie' to Rotherham, Sam was pleasantly surprised by the cultural scene: "There is quite a community of artists here and I wasn't aware of that before."

Looking around the rest of the studio, it struck me that his work varied from sculptures to vivid paintings and portraiture.

Sam claims: "I wouldn't want to limit myself to one medium."



After coming to the conclusion that he is not really cut out for the corporate world, Sam's main focus is now his creative practice. Finding a niche for himself in the art world, he is currently working on a 6ft wooden statue of one of his own characters — a man who rides around the world on horseback — something he does admit is proving "a bit of a challenge".

He is also toying with the idea of doing a Masters in Illustration, to further orchestrate himself in that arena.

Either way his artistic path is paved with ideas and an underlining, refreshing confidence, as he concludes: "Not meaning to sound arrogant, but I believe there is something that is unique to me which I can give."

I asked more about what stimulated him, especially his sculptural work which is unique, and out spilled a list of inspirations including mythology, Christianity, poetry, Shakespeare and comic books.

He said: "I think it's about being brought into a world — any artist who does that, a surrealist or Michelangelo or Judge Dredd, it's immersive in that way I will probably like it."