

Drawing broads

Painting is so last year – now everyone wants to be an illustrator. **Emma Love** makes four pen pals

JO RATCLIFFE

When Levi's and Stüssy commissioned Jo Ratcliffe to design limited-edition T-shirts, they were doubtless unaware that she first honed her technique drawing Action Man and Cindy dolls for the Hasbro toy company.

These days, Ratcliffe, 29, has a rather broader portfolio: she regularly works for fashion magazines, but is also known for her dark, experimental album covers for underground bands. On her crowded drawing board, surrounded by brushes, inks and pencils, is a historical collage of the fashion industry that she's illustrating for Japanese *Vogue*, featuring Vivienne Westwood's head on Queen Victoria's body.

Ratcliffe, who lives in Tufnell Park, grew up in Berkshire (her parents worked for the council and SmithKline Beecham) and always knew she wanted to draw. 'Anything else would have been a waste.'

At 18, she won a place to study fine art at Central Saint Martins, then started working for Hasbro. Fortunately,

she shared her Bethnal Green flat with the art director of *Dazed & Confused*, and was commissioned by the magazine to work with the photographer Nick Knight.

Since then, her drawings have regularly appeared in magazines such as *Vogue* and *Nylon* and last year were featured by Harmony Korine in his exhibition at the Agnes B Gallery in Paris. In September, her work will appear in *The Picture Book*, published by Pentagram, a book showcasing the best contemporary illustrators.

Below: Jo Ratcliffe and (right) her illustration for a fashion show invitation

