



PICTURES: SIMON GUMBLEY

Lido, above, Old Nicosia, below, and Oriel and Porch, all by Anton Christian

A labour of love

Façades – Anton Christian, Lansdown Hall and Gallery, Lansdown, Stroud, Gloucestershire

A four-year-old ballerina, redundancy and some cardboard tubes were the unlikely catalysts for Anton Christian's stunning artwork, which has gone on to feature on stage and in television and film.

At first glance, pictures of the Gloucester-based artist's work look like straight-forward photographs of Mediterranean buildings and quintessentially English houses.

In fact, these are wall-based architectural sculptures crafted in meticulous detail using wood and recycled materials.

The 59-year-old's work has been acclaimed by both fellow artists and those who have discovered his work through word-of-mouth.

Now the artist hopes to reach a wider audience with his latest exhibition, *Façades*, at Lansdown Gallery, in Stroud.

Taking place from March 20 to 25, visitors will be astonished by a selection of more than 20 architectural wall-based sculptures, from West End theatres to Mediterranean homes.

Born in Blackpool in 1957, Anton studied at Blackpool College of Art, followed by Norwich School of Art.

He worked in advertising for a number of years until 1990, when he was made redundant.

"Almost overnight, it seemed the world was full of out-of-work graphic designers, so I had a lot of time on my hands," recalls Anton.

It was while he was looking for work that his four-year-old daughter's ballet teacher approached him about making a prop for an upcoming production of *The Nutcracker*, and fate intervened.

"My daughter's dance teacher asked if I would make a period doll's house as a prop. I gathered some kitchen roll tubes, toilet rolls, an assortment of cardboard tubes and two Walker's crisp boxes and set to work.

"I was pleased with the finished product and the dance mistress was really impressed. But not only that, I found that I loved the process of making it

and I had re-awakened a long dormant passion for architecture."

Anton began making beautiful doll's houses to sell and they were quickly snapped up. After a while, he decided to try something more adventurous; drawing inspiration from overseas trips as well as travel brochures, architecture magazines and the world around him, Anton began to create intricate and stunning building façades.

Throughout the 1990s and beyond, Anton was commissioned to work on the ever-popular children's television series *Thomas the Tank Engine*, as well as films such as *Captain Corelli's Mandolin*, Kenneth Branagh's *Love's Labour's Lost* and the Merchant Ivory production of *The Golden Bowl*.

The unassuming artist uses wood and recycled materials to create his exquisite and unique architectural structures. His work is very hard to pigeon-hole. Anton says: "It's not painting, not sculpture – it falls between a lot of categories. What it is is a labour of love and, I hope, a joy to behold. It doesn't pretend to be 'high art', my intention is to enchant, beguile, command the eye and turn the head. If the work had a voice, it would simply say, 'Look at me, own me'."

And indeed you can own them.

The work on display at the Lansdown Gallery in Stroud will cover a real mix of styles and sizes, with prices ranging from £400 to £2,000. There will be façades of West End buildings, Mediterranean houses, bombed-out flats in Aleppo, Cotswold cottages...

There will even be a replica of the burned-down ruins of Manderley from the classic 1940 film *Rebecca*.

Anton, pictured right, also undertakes commissions. Prices are negotiable and depend on the size and style of the piece you'd like. Email Anton at antonfaçades@gmail.com

Natalie Banyard

Anton's *Façades* exhibition takes place at Lansdown Hall and Gallery, Lansdown, Stroud, Gloucestershire, GL5 1BB from March 20 to 25 at 10am-5pm. Admission is free. Visit www.lansdownhall.org

