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STOS **News**

YouTube artist makes £1.7m on first night

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Chief Arts Correspondent

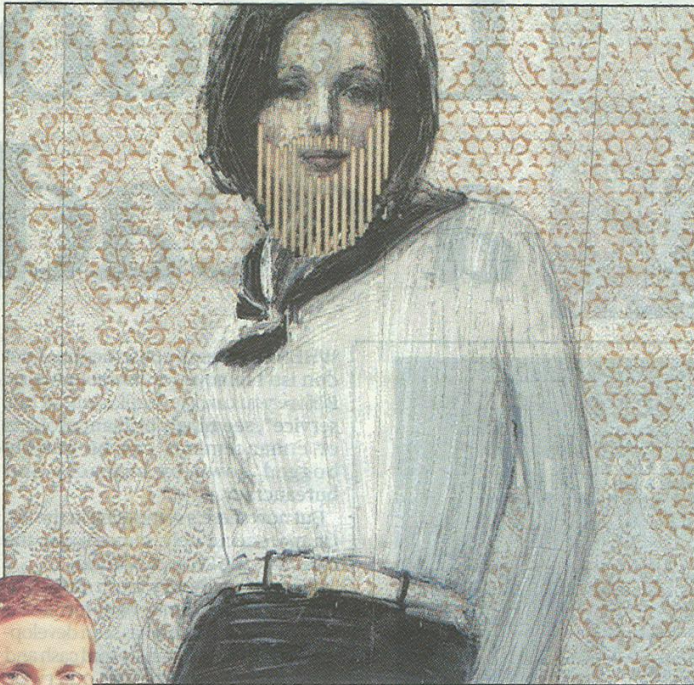
AN artist who funds his own shows and promotes himself on YouTube sold £1.75 million of art on the opening night of his new exhibition.

“Charming” Baker, 47, spent most of his career as a commercial artist – having started work as a road digger before exhibiting his paintings for the first time five years ago.

But he quickly won the support of collectors from Frank Cohen, dubbed the Saatchi of the North, to Damien Hirst, who described his work as “great”. Rock stars Noel Gallagher and Ronnie Wood were among the guests at the opening of his new show in Covent Garden and it was a sell-out even before the show of sculptures, paintings and prints opened to the public.

Baker, who lives in Lewisham with his wife, Tanya, a French teacher, and their five children, said it did not mean that everyone could do as he had done without galleries and dealers: “But if I’ve proved anything, it’s you can find your own path.”

He said he had been “living quietly” until mounting his first pop-up show at the Truman Brewery in east London in 2007. Pat Magnarella, manager of rock giants Green Day, took him under his wing after seeing those



works and encouraged him to show in New York last year. He has been invited to return to America next year to show at Lever House where previous exhibi-

tions have showcased Jeff Koons and Hirst.

But he wanted to show on home turf – and without all the costs incurred by shipping. The money did not matter to him, he said, but the freedom did. “I



Charming prints: left, *I Like You Fantastically Well But For All The Wrong Reasons; above, I've Surprised Myself By Coming To Terms With The End Of The World; and, right, All I Want Is For You To Speak Unless You Can Improve On The Silence.* Inset, “Charming” Baker



The Pop father hates X Factor

Louise Jury

HE is the father of British pop art – but cannot stand some of Britain’s modern popular culture.

As Sir Peter Blake, who created the album cover for the Beatles’ Sergeant Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band, opens a new exhibition of his prints he has revealed his dislike of shows like The X Factor.

“I saw a little bit of X Factor and it seems horrific. This kid was singing really badly and they were kind of laughing at him and it seemed such a monstrous thing to be doing I never watched again,” he said.

Sir Peter, who turns 80 next year, is showing signs of joining the Establishment. He is painting St Martin for St Paul’s Cathedral – even though he is not a believer.

■ *Peter Blake – In Print is at the Hyatt Regency London – The Churchill until October.*

name by being polite when he worked as a labourer before studying at St Martin’s art college.

■ *Charming Baker is at the Mercer Street Studios in Covent Garden until July 31.*