



Seattle

Amtrak's National Route System

As interpreted by fashion illustrator Blair Breitenstein

New York

Chicago

Los Angeles

Dallas

Miami



Clockwise, from left: Breitenstein at work in her first New York studio; the group portrait *School*; the limited-edition packaging she designed for Fresh cosmetics



In 2013, Blair Breitenstein was working for an ad agency in Seattle. Bored with her job and inspired by the pictures she had torn out of fashion magazines at her grandparents' house as a girl, she began making illustrations of haute couture designs on the side. She sketched an Oscar de la Renta dress and on a whim tagged the fashion house on Instagram. A few days later, the atelier invited her out to live-sketch outfits during its spring/summer 2015 runway show at New York Fashion Week. Breitenstein was seated directly behind Anna Wintour. She remembers thinking, "If I was super persistent in tagging, what else could happen?"

What happened is this: Breitenstein became one of the most sought-after

illustrators in the fashion world. The 29-year-old went from creating ads for local businesses in Seattle to drawing designer-clad glamazons for the ad campaigns and social media accounts of megawatt brands like Prada, *Harper's Bazaar*, MAC Cosmetics, and Saks Fifth Avenue.

But not everyone understands the niche she's carved out. "My dad is really confused by the type of artwork I do," Breitenstein says with a laugh. "It's small scale. When people think of art, it has to have a big story or canvas behind it." In her work, name brands tell the story: A girl in cat-eye sunglasses clutches a bottle of Bombay Sapphire; a bombshell puts in Gucci's signature "GG" earrings. Breitenstein magnifies eyes, mouths, and accessories, channeling the glamorous

insouciance and unabashedly feminine spirit of the '90s supermodels she grew up idolizing. But she also approaches the often self-serious fashion industry with amusement—for example, a group portrait of models with fish-tail-like blue eyeshadow is titled *School*.

Her process is quick: charmingly imperfect lines sketched in "10 minutes or less" on brown kraft paper with pastels and markers. "The point for me is to get the idea of a dress on paper and translate the look in my own style," Breitenstein explains. "It's spontaneous, not overworked or overthought."

For her redesign of Amtrak's route map, Breitenstein chose to populate the country with the sybaritic women who have become her signature, while celebrating the influence of cities not traditionally thought of as fashion capitals, like Dallas and Seattle, near her hometown of Mercer Island. "Seattle is a really big, fast-growing city—Nordstrom's headquartered there," Breitenstein says, noting that when she considers cities shaping American style, "If you had to go beyond New York and L.A., Seattle is the place I'd include." —**Sahar Khan**