

Walls, paper & inspiration

Jasmine Viney speaks to the lady sneaking art into people's homes

How you decide to decorate the four walls of your home is a personal choice.

Whether it be with canvas, tile, wallpaper or just standard paint, you can be as creative or uncreative as you like.

Artist, designer and maker, Deborah Bowness, creates wallpaper with a difference.

For 20 years now, Deborah has been selling, exhibiting and designing handprinted wallpaper for homes, restaurants, hotels, pretty much anything with walls.

Her own way of making wallpaper means she has combined digital print with silk screen printing and the occasional block colour.

She describes her art as different.

"I would like to say that I challenge preconceived notions of wallpaper and the way you hang it.

"The paper is pictured hanging from the walls rather than stuck, and lines can be placed unaligned.

"Making my art is beautiful," she says.

Her works intention is to interact quietly and playfully with objects and furniture but not dominate the surrounding environment.

After obtaining a Master of Art in constructed textiles from the Royal College of Art in 1999, Deborah spent 12 years in London starting up her business.

She chose wallpaper as 'a way to sneak it into people's houses as well as communicating to a commercial market'.

When the revolution of the Internet came about, she was able to transport her company South and settle in St Leonards-on-Sea where she is now based.

"I just like the challenge of running a business selling art but also making a product," she says.

While we would all like to know the secrets to Deborah's work, she is unsure where her inspiration comes from.

"I think I am just aware, and things seep in without me realising."

Her latest collection involves wall collages, re-using vintage wallpaper.

The previous one looked at functional paper such as lined paper, graph paper.

"But it is more conceptual," she says, "it is more than just an image it is a way of applying it."

The artist continues to say that when she is relaxed, the work comes.

Deborah encourages her buyers to view and to use her art however they desire.

"I present the concept for using walls as a surface to put pattern on, and then people decide what to do with it."

As long as people look at her work with an open mind then her job is fulfilled.

The unique wallpapers have received many awards including Homes & Gardens Design Award, Northern Design Award and ICFF Editors Awards, just to name a few.

"It is a real privilege and reassurance," she explains.

"It keeps me going when you realise that people are taking notice of what you are doing. You are in your own little world then you believe in yourself and your work and it is a really nice thing that the industry does, support designers."

The future looks pretty consistent for Deborah.

It is about furthering the concept of what she already does.

"The goal is to be able to exist doing what I do until I am not existing anymore," she says.

Deborah's new collection launched in May while she was in New York.

This will be her seventh time in the big apple attending a trade show.

"The Americans seem to be quite open to British design," she says.

"If anyone told me I would be selling images on paper, dresses and books on paper for a living then I would not have believed them.

"I feel very fortunate to be able to do what I do."



To see more of her products and designs, visit her website www.deborahbowness.com

The colourful collage images with stripes. Pictures: Alexander Brattell.

The black and white floral interior shots, product shot & portrait image. Pictures: Julian Anderson

