

# Different strokes

We meet Louise Dean of The Creative Decorator, who specialises in bespoke hand-painted art

**How did you get into what you do?** I've painted all my life. When my children were little I painted animals on their nursery walls. I found it so much fun that I started doing it for friends and it evolved from there. I've always been interested in interior design, so painting walls in a decorative way combines my passions as an artist and a designer.

**Have you always been interested in designing and making?** As a child I was really into art, both drawing and painting. In fact, I really wanted to be an artist, or an actress or an astronomer. I have always identified with being creative.

**What was the first piece you ever made?** Initially I was doing animals for my daughter and Sonic the Hedgehog for my son. Shortly after that, when I was painting for friends, I realised that I loved trees and birds. Over time this has become my signature look. In the early days people were asking me to recreate things that already existed from film



or TV, but now they seem to be buying into my style, which is brilliant!

## What inspires your designs?

There are lots of different things that inspire me. I love the cleanliness and simplicity of the Scandinavian look, but then at the opposite end of the spectrum I love chinoiserie and that opulent hand-painted feel. Nature is also a massive inspiration to me.

## How does the making process work?

It usually starts with a conversation. Either the customer knows exactly what they want, or they have no idea, so I will try and come up with ideas and get them inspired. Often I look at the fabrics and colours that are in the room and work with that. It's a massive privilege for someone to trust me to go ahead and paint on their walls and it is very rewarding.

## Where do you source your materials?

I use emulsion and acrylics as well as paints with a special finish; a metallic finish or a glitter finish, for example. All of this is readily available, so there is no great mysterious process involved. I also use a lot of Farrow & Ball paints, and I often mix them with white emulsion to give them a lovely muted colour.

## Do you enjoy working for yourself?

Yes, it's very rewarding and fulfilling and is flexible around my family. It's very satisfying to make people

happy and to do something a bit out of the ordinary. I do miss being part of a team, though, as for the last eight years I've been working as a swimming teacher, but I gave that up recently to focus on my business. It can be lonely at times but when I'm doing a job I enjoy listening to the radio or getting lost in an audiobook.

## What's the most important thing you've learnt?

I think it is self-belief and the determination to carry on against the odds. I feel like at first I let this business grow organically around everything else, but now I am more focused it is really paying off.

## What's next for your business?

Well I am in talks with a local hotel and hopefully I'm going to be involved with redecorating some of the bedrooms. I would love to get into the commercial sector, such as wedding shops, boutique hotels and independent bars and restaurants. I think that hand-painted walls could really set a business apart. I am open to all ideas but I want to keep expanding my own themes and develop my confidence in my style. Rather than trying to do everything, I would love to specialise and have my own look. As with anything it is difficult to try and be everything to everyone.

You can shop online for cushions and accessories at [www.wealdenfairs.com/thecreativedecorator](http://www.wealdenfairs.com/thecreativedecorator).



## Clockwise from above

Teal peacock canvas embellished with glitter, 30 x 30cm, £80. Hand-painted blue silk cushion

with bird motif, 30 x 30cm, £45. Louise in her garden with Luna the Cock-A-Chon (a cocker spaniel/bichon frise cross).