

My Space

LIZ WHITESIDE

Recently appointed ambassador to the children's charity, Dream Come True, artist Liz Whiteside talks to Accent about her new role, her design decisions and how she is still influenced by her mum...



My sitting room is an eclectic mix of designer furniture, such as my beautiful white leather Barcelona chair, to my bargain finds, like my pink Ottoman from TK Maxx. I'm not afraid to have a bold statement wall, at the moment floral Nina Campbell paper, to bring all my colours together. I'm not frightened of mixing textures, or old and new, by putting a cow hide cushion on my chair then adding modern glass tables and placing them next to my grand stone fireplace with wood burner. Interior design excites me.

I think my interior design choices are dictated by my art as it's only since coming back to art in late 2008 that I've finally truly found my interior style. I've now designed three homes – in London, Aberdeen and now Newcastle. I'm comfortable in my choices and I'm not afraid to use colour, as you will find in my landscape paintings.

I approach a blank canvas, by planning everything in my mind first. I am capable of mentally stripping a room or house, which has been a very useful tool in my many house moves. It means I can make quick design decisions with a builder and so far I've been happy with the result. I do the same in art. I tend to plan the painting in my mind. Luckily acrylic paint is very forgiving but I've found this works for me.

I think I was chosen by Dreams Come True to become an Ambassador because my paintings have a lovely naive quality. They're bright and full of energy and hopefully make people smile. I think these images appeal to both children and adults alike. I didn't plan this it just evolved naturally. I think the magical quality comes from putting my heart into each painting. The Beautiful Sky image, which I've donated to the charity, was inspired by my mum, who sadly passed away 16 months ago to breast cancer. I found myself looking up at the sky and hoping she was looking down on me.

I'm going to meet the Dream children at Hamley's in London on June 15 and will judge art competitions in the future. I think art is wonderful way of expressing your emotions and if I can help these amazing children in any way it will be an honour. I would like to eventually become the charity's voice of the North East and get involved in any way I can. My first job has been to donate an original painting to the charity. I'm then selling limited edition prints of that artwork, with a large percentage from each print being donated to Dreams Come True.

My late mother was my big inspiration. I remember as a child how creative she was. She would sell work through local galleries but unfortunately never got chance to reach

her full potential. The same could have happened to me but by chance a friend put a paintbrush in my hand, when I visited her studio in late 2008. I'm proud to say I'm self taught as it's been quite a journey. My work has really evolved in this last year since my mother's sudden passing and I feel her with me when I'm working. She would say to me 'don't worry about what people think, believe in yourself.' How could I now stop creating?

I've just moved into Studio 10 at Allendale Forge in Northumberland, where I work every Tuesday and Saturday. You can become quite insular if you're not careful so I'm really looking forward to being around other creative people. I'm taking part in the Northumberland Art Tour every weekend in June, so hopefully I'll get a lot of visitors then.

I would love it if people could help raise money for Dreams Come True. On June 20 the charity is asking people across the UK to gather friends, family and colleagues, to bake or buy some cakes and take time out to enjoy a good cuppa and a chat. You can raise money for by asking for donations for tea and cake, holding a fancy dress tea party at work or creating your very own bake-off. It's that simple and all donations go directly towards making more children's dreams come true.

For information on how to register go to www.dreamscometrue.uk.com/dreamtea. www.lizwhiteside.com.