

DEBORAH DREW, HAS BEEN AN INTERIOR DESIGNER SINCE 1997 AND PREVIOUSLY RAN HER OWN BUSINESS IN CARDIFF BEFORE JOINING DIY SOS IN SERIES NINE. HER ARTISTIC EYE ENABLED HER TO CREATE BEAUTIFUL, STYLISH INTERIORS WHICH WE ALL FELL IN LOVE WITH. DEBORAH HAS NOW BECOME AN OFFICIAL MEMBER OF THE WELSH LIVING TEAM AND WILL HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO WRITE FOR US IN EVERY EDITION. HERE WE GET TO KNOW DEBORAH IN MORE DETAIL BEFORE SHE REVEALS HER SECRETS AND IDEAS.

When did you first discover your passion for design?
“Well, you’ll probably laugh, but I suppose my earliest memory of designing was when I was about seven years old when I had outgrown my Wendy House. Obviously, in those days there were no Playstations or DS Lites and we used to have to be more creative with our time. So each time ‘The Green’, a field behind my house, used to get mowed in the summer, my friend and I used to gather up the freshly cut grass and lay it in rows to create the ground floor plans of a house. The houses could be as big as we liked, or, at least, until we ran out of grass, and we would always include a kitchen, bathroom, bedroom and toilet - we used to wander in and out of this space for hours. To be honest we must have looked very peculiar to passers by, but we used to love it. More recently, I think the purchase of our first property in 1993 really brought out my desire for interiors. Everything needed doing, and, of course, it was all on a budget, but I was in my element. I even kept diaries with all the samples of the papers, paints and fabrics we used, which are lovely to have, and that is, of course, when I began to study interior design”.

What inspires you?

Architecture inspires me. I like uniformity, and things in order.

What annoys you?

Lemon with gin and tonic, I like lime!

If you could be someone else for a day, who would it be?

I think a day in the life of Leonardo DaVinci would be incredible, pick up a few tips while I’m there. Or possibly a day in the life of the very first person to discover the wheel, can you imagine that moment, how cool would that be, I bet the party was huge.

Who is your favourite designer?

“I’m always impressed with the lighting designs of Ingo Maurer. I have a penchant for the old pendants anyway, but he is just so quirky yet classic and always very beautiful. I want his ‘Birdie’s Nest’ chandelier and I love the Lucellino table lamps. Most people will actually have seen some of his work because he designed the hanging candles in the Harry Potter films, the ones that just appear to float”.

Do you have a favourite DIY SOS highlight?

“I think my favourite would have to be a job we did in East Harling, Norfolk for a gorgeous little boy called Jacob who suffered with quadriplegic cerebral palsy. My brief was to create a sensory bedroom. You may not be aware, but a lot of the special needs items on the market are quite expensive and my budget was pretty much used up on a large bubble tube as well as a fibre optic curtain, which was placed at the end of Jacob’s bed so that the strands could be laid across him for stimulation. His mum wrote to me afterwards and said how he will stare at the curtain until they switch it on and then he smiles.

With the bulk of the budget gone I designed a long sensory wall in the shape of a wave using just MDF. We cut out circles in various sizes and wrapped different fabrics each with different colours and textures around the discs of MDF and then placed them back into the holes. Behind some of the holes we placed mirrors and in other places we just stuck on round push on/off battery operated lights. It looked amazing and was exactly what Jacob needed, and it was an aspiring idea for the viewer as well, it was cheap but very effective”.

What is the one Question you always get asked?

“Can you come and do my house?” is the usual, but then that’s not a bad thing is it? Oh and ‘Do you really do it in three days?’. It’s funny, a lot of people will come over talk to me, and I don’t mind at all, in fact, I take it as a real compliment. One of the funniest I can remember is when they were filming Nick and I outside a fireplace shop in Northampton. A man in a van was driving past and he wound down his window and shouted Hi to Nick, and then proceeded with ‘Don’t bother asking her, she can’t make up her mind’, obviously to Nick’s delight. That was the moment that I first realised the power of television”.

How would you describe yourself in five words?

“‘As mad as a goose’, no only joking, I would say honest, grounded, empathetic, hard-working and vivacious”.

What is the biggest obstacle you have had to overcome?

I have a fantastic family, loving husband, two healthy children so I am very lucky. I am very fortunate. It was hard to juggle my family and my work, my parents would help me if I was away though. If they hadn’t been able to do that I wouldn’t have taken the job.

Are you happy with the way things panned out?

I know it was the right time for me, the programme is so strong and popular. I had an amazing experience but nothing comes close to what’s real, and my family are real.

If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?

My hands are really big, but they are very creative so I wouldn’t change that. I don’t think there is anything I would change, I’m not that self indulgent.

Would you ever do a celebrity reality show?

I like to watch people and analyse them. I would love to do Big Brother, I couldn’t do “I’m a Celebrity, Get Me Out of Here”, because I hate flying! I had to do some flights for DIY SOS and it was a horrible experience.

What other fears do you have?

I’m a born worrier, I don’t take any pain killers, nothing at all.

What one thing did you learn about yourself doing the programme?

If I learnt one thing from the programme, I learnt a lot about myself. It was easy to be yourself and have a laugh. The TV me, is the real me. I would struggle to be somebody else, or to act. No Hollywood starring roles for me. DIY SOS was reality, they wanted the moments where it went wrong, the banter and the real life emotions.

Apart from being our Columnist, what’s next for you?

I am re-establishing Deborah Drew Designs, I have given the website an overdue face lift. I now have the opportunity to do some writing which is fantastic. I’d like to do some commissioned art works and do personal shopping which I think will be great fun. There’s a real use for that and I can help people accessorize, I think there’s a real call for it. People know what they like but I can help tie all the loose ends together. I’m really looking forward to the future.

Deborah Drew



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