



Beautiful by design

Business woman Debbie Henderson shows us around her stunning home where work and interior design combine beautifully. Amanda Griffiths reports

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANDREW NICHOLAIDES



Right: Debbie Henderson at home in Windermere

Just because you're renting, it doesn't mean you can't make it a 'home' for you and your family. Just ask business woman Debbie Henderson, who has been living in her rented Windermere home for three years.

Renting means you are unlikely to be ripping down walls but there are lots of little tricks that Debbie has employed at home to turn her house into a comfortable, cosy and contemporary home.

'It's all about making the most of the space you've got to work with, the light and keeping your focus on what you want to achieve,' explains Debbie as she shows me the home, she shares with her sons, Sam and Louis.

'I was lucky. The previous tenant left me with a neutral colour scheme all the way through and I've injected colour here and there, like the shocking pink chairs in the kitchen.'

Debbie, who runs the attic gift and



The dining room



Left: Cutlery hooks in the dining room

Below: Old spoon cupboard in the kitchen



Left: Old and new combine in the dining room

Below: The exterior



the shop. I have bought things specifically for Christmas windows and they've sold before I can actually use them.

'I found this old red bike for one and then this lady came in and said she was a children's author who'd written a story about a red bike and this would be perfect for her to use alongside it. Another year I bought an old traditional sleigh for the window and this lady came in begging me to sell it her. I refused at first because it was for the window but she came back and we did a deal that she would pay for it and collect it on Christmas eve for her husband's >

homeware shops, believes that unless you're tremendously good at working with colour it's always best to stick to neutrals. 'I've learnt that from experience!' she adds. 'I saw a feature in a magazine and the room was decorated in purple and orange - it looked

amazing so I thought I'd try it at home. It looked like I'd painted the room with a blindfold on!'

Debbie's work means she has a keen idea of how she wants a room to look, what style she wants to achieve and how best to do it. She's also lucky in the fact that her day-to-day business sees her searching for key pieces for her shops in Windermere, Ambleside and Grasmere, either one-offs for window displays or suitable ranges. This is very much where work meets home.

'I love collecting old bits and pieces,' says Debbie. 'Things like butter pats, twists and bottles that all have that

nostalgic feel about them. You can pick things like this up for about £3 at antique or vintage fairs so you don't have to spend a lot to add those finishing touches to a room.

'I love the mix of the old and new coming together to create something beautiful. For example, my cupboard above the coffee machine is made from an old wooden cupboard with a metal spoon

as the handle. Likewise, there's the notice-board with old whisks and strainers hanging and the shelf unit in the dining room is made from antique jelly moulds and spoons and forks bent into hooks.

'I love my Baby Daisy Vacuum Cleaner. I saw it and just had to have it. I do love collecting pieces like this, I often swap them between the shop and home. The old suitcases in my bedroom I got when we were had a travel section in

“The room was decorated in purple and orange - it looked like I'd painted it with a blindfold on!”



Left: The conservatory



Christmas present,' she says. Debbie's home also features many of the ranges that customers can also find in the shops including slate coasters in the dining room, little wooden hearts and signs, soft furnishings like cushions and a range of cutlery by French company Conptoir de Famille. 'They basically send people out to flea markets and places like that in France and buy old bits of furniture, crockery and glassware for example and reproduce it to sell. It's new, but it has that old feel to it,' she explains.

These items all sit alongside some more personal mementoes: 'My grandmother lived in India for about 25 years,' says Debbie. 'When I was a child she used to tell me stories about living there and I've got all sorts of Indian influences around the house from pieces that were hers.'

These include an elephant table in the front room and a sandalwood chest, which once would have been used to store bedding away from moths as

sandalwood is a natural anti-deterrent for them but which in the 21st century Debbie uses to store DVDS.

In the dining room a picture of an Indian man hangs on one wall. 'This painting is by one of my Gran's favourite artists,' she says. 'When she was leaving to come home her friends clubbed together to buy it for her. It's just some random guy but I think it's special all the same.'

'The framed Indian scarf, hand woven in gold thread was also hers. I



The kitchen



Left: The master bedroom
Below: The silver tinware furniture was bought especially for Debbie's bedroom



had two of these ever since I was a child. They were just sitting in a drawer in danger of getting damaged from just sitting there being folded all the time, so I decided to make a feature of them and took them to a gentleman in Kendal who framed them for me.

'I do like to swap my pictures around. This is perfect hanging here for the summer as it's quite cool, but in the winter I take it down and replace it with something that has a warmer feeling.'

Debbie believes achieving a blend of the old and the new is not hard. 'The key thing is to keep your focus. People seem to think if they buy a particular item it will immediately transform their home into looking like the display, but it's not as easy as that,' she says.

'I've been at this for three years and I'm still only just finding the right

"I love the mix of old and new coming together to create something beautiful"

pieces for the look I want to achieve at home, like a gramophone I've just bought for the dining room, or a little picnic basket I've displayed in the conservatory. Some people would say I was mad just having it and the tea set

inside it on display like that, but what else are you going to do with it? Keep it shut inside a cupboard somewhere? To me it makes more sense to have it open and on

display - it makes me smile every time I go into the conservatory.

'I think the main thing you need to remember is to do one room at a time and decide what look you want to achieve, whether that's contemporary, vintage or shabby chic. Keep your focus and once you feel comfortable move on to the next. Do it in manageable and achievable portions because otherwise you can just be overwhelmed by it all.' 🌹

DEBBIE'S TOP TIPS

1. I love mixing old pieces with new ones. Often, the old pieces bring some humour to a room.
2. When I need an inspiration fix, I visit GB Antiques in Lancaster. Be warned - you'll need at least a couple of hours!
3. Unless you are supremely confident with strong colours on walls, opt for more muted tones and use fabrics and accessories to add vibrancy to rooms.
4. If you want a 'new look' piece of furniture on a budget, see what you can pick up at a car boot sale or flea market, paint it a bold colour and then again in a softer shade (preferably the colour of the wall it is standing against). Sandpaper the corners, handles and raised areas to allow the bold colour to show through.
5. If you are trying to create a 'look', be it contemporary or shabby chic, be patient and find the right pieces. One stunning piece will get you started but won't be enough to create a theme, so stay focused.

