



AT HOME WITH **MARY ROSE YOUNG** CERAMICIST  
**ON THE BRIGHT  
 SIDE OF LIFE**

**Jane Stacey** visits Mary Rose Young and finds her love of vibrant colour and zany sense of fun are not restricted to her work

Photographs **Christopher Jones**

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**P**otter Mary Rose Young lives in the Forest of Dean in Gloucestershire with her husband, Phil Butcher, a former bass player with Iggy Pop. The oldest part of the house was built 150 years ago, originally as two quarry workers' cottages. Mary Rose, 55, bought them 30 years ago. They were so cheap that she could afford to add a pottery and gallery. 'As there wasn't much character to the cottages and they're situated in a dip with not much natural light,' she says, 'I thought I'd paint everywhere with masses of bright colour to add vibrancy and fun.' Fun with a capital 'F' inspires both her life and her work.

Ever since Ozzy Osbourne drank tea from his Mary Rose mug on primetime TV, a stream of beautiful people have been spotted buying up her work, including the lead singer of the American band Aerosmith, Steve Tyler, who bought a tea set for his eldest daughter, the actress Liv Tyler. British fashion designer Jean Muir also loves the brightness of Mary Rose's work as a dramatic contrast to her own pared-down, minimalist style.

**MARY ROSE**  
 IN HER OWN WORDS

**Pots of fun and wonder**

I always aim to inject the most exuberance, fun and childlike wonderment into my work. I want to cram it all into a pot. That and a touch of glamour – the reason ▶



**WONDERLAND**  
 Like something out of *Alice*, a tea-service chandelier hangs in the kitchen; Opposite: Mary Rose's dazzling ceramics are matched by her own sense of style



**'I just love the energy the rose shape inspires'**

◁ I often add gold to my colours. We're only here for a while, so I want to go for it. I sell my pottery all over the world. What I love is the thought that the people buying it are just like me, only maybe living in New York. They're buying into this fun. I applied the same principles to my home. The idea set me free. I thought, 'I've got a house. I'm an artist. It's a 3D canvas.' It gave me great pleasure to paint every surface. The colours and patterns flow from one room to the next. They disguise the dirt too.

**Roses all the way**

When I began using roses in my work 30 years ago, people kept asking me if it was because of my name. But it wasn't, or at least not consciously so. I just love the energy the shape inspires. I like to paint them with a swirl so you see the brush strokes, and I have them dancing together so the roses face each other. This gives off an energy too. I've painted them all over my house. I think they work as a motif anywhere, from floorboards and walls to the sink and loo. Now I'm trapped by the success of my roses and flowers in my work, but I'm proud to have forged this joyful path with the help of my customers.

**Pinky and perky**

Grey is a mistake. If you're dying your hair, go colourful. I was blonde for a while but it was my mum's suggestion to go pink. That was ten years ago now, so I'm definitely tuned in to my pink. Lots of my ▶

**KALEIDOSCOPIC COLOUR** *This page:* hand-painted roses on plain tiles in the bathroom; a visit to TK Maxx resulted in this pouffe, armchair and one of several mosaic vases in the house. *Opposite:* the dining room has a floral theme; an Ikea carpet and Conran sofa in the sitting room; artificial flowers from an Indian supermarket decorate a lampshade



◁ clothes are pink, as are my eye shadow and lipstick. Phil says I'm Pinky to his Perky.

#### Greatest influence

My mum inspired me. Our house was coral pink on the outside and she painted furniture – unusual in those days. I remember a piece of Habitat furniture she bought and got my dad to paint with green and blue stripes. Mum wasn't particularly arty but what I took from her was that she wasn't afraid to be different.

#### All that glisters

My Billie Beads jewellery is my all-time favourite. It's handmade by a husband-and-wife team in New York. We regularly do swops at fairs – their beads for my pottery.

My current excitement is collecting coloured glass. We've just come back from Venice and I bought some multicoloured tumblers on Murano. I also love my mirror mosaic vases. I spotted them in TK Maxx. They were really cheap. I bought them all; there were about 20 of them, and they're now dotted around the house. Like a magpie, I was attracted to their sparkle.

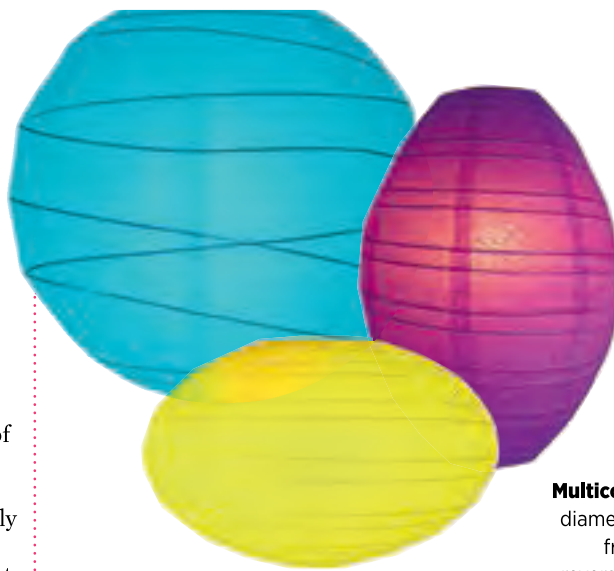
#### I'm potty about...

Villeroy & Boch, especially their square plates – a shape I can't make myself because I throw everything on the potter's wheel. I also like PiP Studio stuff. It's so pretty. Pip uses the pink, red and gold combination like me, but in a more delicate way.

#### Celebrity fans

Jean Muir used to buy directly from me when I had a stand at the Chelsea Craft Fair in the Eighties. People would ask what she'd bought so they could buy the same. She was the height of sophisticated style so I'm very proud. Demi Moore bought stuff in the South of France, Ozzy Osbourne in Malibu and Ruby Wax from Liberty in London. I just think, 'Hurray! I'm so glad they've bought into this fun, which I'm spreading where I can.'

**FOR MORE PHOTOGRAPHS** of Mary Rose Young's home, go to [saga.co.uk/magazine](http://saga.co.uk/magazine). To buy Mary Rose's pottery, go to [maryroseyoung.com](http://maryroseyoung.com)



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### MARY ROSE YOUNG

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