

## Mary Rose Young

Mary Rose was born near London in 1958. As a child her family moved around frequently – practically every year they moved to a new house and the children had to settle in a new school. One year was even spent in a remote fishing village in Minorca on the Mediterranean. Eventually they all settled down in the Forest of Dean, an old coal mining region of the west of England, where Mary Rose has lived ever since.



She studied ceramics at art college in Wolverhampton. Her particular interest at the time was making sculptural pieces of pottery, which were expressive representations of everyday objects. Among her successful degree pieces was a 3 dimensional “Washing Up Bowl” with saucepan handles and edges of plates protruding from a bowl of dirty water, while the first piece pictured in a magazine was a wacky ceramic filofax (then an item in its heyday).

It was only after leaving art college that Mary Rose became interested in throwing pieces at the wheel. She had moved into a farmhouse, which had many empty mantelpieces and window sills: she needed something glamorous to brighten the place up. Applying the bright colour she had used earlier onto her newly thrown pots immediately found the look she had hoped for. Needless to say her sense of fun spilled over onto the shapes and

designs she was producing.

Her new range of pottery was clearly a potential source of income and from about 1985 Mary Rose began to sell from a barrow at the Dockside Arts Centre in Bristol. Her earliest designs included the rose motif which seemed so appropriate next to her name, and the humorous, frantic chicken. The roses began to grow in a three dimensional form on the rims of vases and on the handles of mugs. Mary Rose felt that one shouldn't have to be continually finding bunches of fresh flowers to make a vase work; why not buy a vase with its own bunch of permanent roses? She called the look “Rose Encrusted”.

In 1986 she moved out of her freezing farmhouse shed into a small “unit” which became her pottery. This was in the village of Parkend near which she had bought an adjoining pair of quarry-men's cottages in need of renovation. While working here and still selling every weekend in Bristol she began to get signs of recognition from the outside world. There was a magazine article for South West Arts, an interview with Jan Leeming for TV, and acceptance by the Crafts Council for her application to exhibit at the Chelsea Crafts Fair.

The Chelsea shows exposed Mary Rose to all the designers and buyers in the UK but more importantly to visitors from America and Europe. She sold the stock of pottery she took to Chelsea but she also returned to Parkend with orders from retailers like Barneys in New York. This signalled the end of her days selling in Bristol.

In 1990 Mary Rose was able to relocate her pottery in her newly refurbished home “Oak House”. While making the new orders she set about decorating Oak House in designs which reflected her new vivid style. Every surface of every room came alive with paint. The gallery ceiling was striped, the dressing room floor grew roses and even the toilets and tiles became exotically coloured. This attracted interiors magazines to do features on Mary Rose alongside pages of photographs of her

home. Metropolitan Home was first followed by World of Interiors, Elle Decoracion, Schöner Wohnen from Germany, and many others. At the time of writing (April '98) The Daily Telegraph Interiors magazine is due to publish another feature within the month.

While Mary Rose's "Rose Design" has remained very popular, she has continually expanded her range of shapes and designs. She started to use gold lustre in 1993 with a look called Jewelled and Beaded on which her intention was to make pottery which resembled a pirate's treasure – goblets and vases encrusted with golden jewels. Gold has become a stronger theme in her range while candlesticks, mirrors, toilets and clocks have all joined the original mugs, jugs and vases.

Surrounded by the rural beauty of the Forest of Dean and the colour of Oak House, Mary Rose has been very happy to remain making the pottery that is ordered by the growing number of retailers and collectors. She also finds plenty of time to experiment with new ideas. Most recently she has started using a crown as a motif for teapots and cups and saucers, the notion is glamorous yet the interpretation humorous. Her chandelier is another creation from 2007 a giant piece composed of hand made ceramic beads. She has also continued to license some ideas to larger giftware companies and you may occasionally encounter these mass produced pieces in the High Street.

Mary Rose Young became Mary Rose Butcher in 1996 when she married Phil, a musician. Phil had most famously played as Iggy Pop's bassist for a while and later as part of the much acclaimed darkly comic trio The Tiger Lillies. Phil suffered a brain aneurism in 1999 that has demanded a long recovery.

Despite her pottery having found its way to the four corners of the world, Mary Rose doesn't travel around very much. She usually displays her latest pieces at the New York Gift Show every August. Her brother James Young, who acts as her business manager, will more usually be found at her several exhibitions where her radiant display will still cause passers by to draw their breath in disbelief.