



A dreamer's journey

Ruth Cadioli tells **Kate Kunkel** about her artistic influences, revealing how she developed a style best described as imaginative chaos.

Ruth Cadioli has always been a dreamer. As a child, she would sit in her room for hours, drawing whatever her imagination could conjure. Everyone around her said she'd be an artist some day. Their predictions proved true years later when Ruth decided to commit to finding her own artistic style.

While some young adults head off to study art at a university, Ruth embarked on independent research to develop a unique style. "I've always liked teaching myself how to do things," she says. "It all just comes naturally to people who are artistic, and I didn't want someone else telling me how to paint."

Ruth combined drawing, painting and other media to figure out what worked best for her. Over the past few years, she has developed a body of work that satisfies her artistic appetite and expresses her imaginative personality perfectly: a series of bird-themed wallpaper designs.

Although she didn't realise it at the time, her passion for this theme probably reflects a family history of birdwatching. Ruth has memories of an enormous aviary owned by her grandfather, and her parents were so keen on the feathered creatures that they even incorporated birdwatching into their honeymoon. This long-time family interest in birds is now playing out in Ruth's artworks.

In Ruth's *Wallpaper* series, she revisits and reworks the wallpaper styles of past eras to give her art a vintage feel. Her inspiration is her childhood home, which was built in the 1940s and had bold printed wallpaper from floor to ceiling. Ruth has added a psychedelic element, resulting in a style she describes as "quite chaotic".

"My art is a bit *Alice in Wonderland*, only I'm Alice and the paintings are of my wonderland!" she says.

Perhaps Ruth's artistic chaos comes from her eclectic background, which included stints in South Africa, New Zealand and Australia, she muses. "When you grow up with different cultures, they all become a part of you. I guess I'm kind of a confused person without a place to belong. I blend in quite well, but I do feel a little out of place every now and then."

Drawing inspiration from the late German-born painter Mati Klarwein and his links to surrealism, Ruth has developed her own dreamy style; her ideas are intuitive rather than calculated, she says.

For Ruth, the creative process requires total relaxation, a state in which she can forget any worries and the rest of the world doesn't seem to exist. Often, she'll close her eyes and wait for something to flash before her, she says. Then she allows colours, patterns and styles to manifest as ☺

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Previous page, main and inset: Ruth's colourful works 'Face' and 'Peacocks'.

Above and left: unnamed; 'Little Brown Jobs II', a painting that shows Ruth's intricate style.

she works. Sometimes her projects can take years to complete as she perfects every detail and allows each piece to progress as needed.

On completing a project, the difficult part begins. As Ruth explains, it took her years to put a price tag on her artworks and to have the confidence to show them to others. She compares her work to a diary that expresses everything inside her, so putting it on display was a daunting prospect. Artists can be their own obstacles, she says, because they struggle with the steps beyond creating their works, which can make it difficult to develop a fully-fledged career in art.

When she isn't creating art, Ruth works at a medical facility to pay the bills. While her job is unrelated to art, she says it sometimes allows her mind to wander, giving her time to conceptualise her next creations. Unfortunately, she often forgets those ideas by the time she gets home, she adds with a laugh. "In the future, I hope to really live my dream and completely support myself with my art."

While Ruth continues to develop her confidence as an artist, she's grateful to the people who helped coax her out of her comfort zone. In 2009, artist Alison Mooney came across Ruth's work online while looking for local art to showcase in her gallery. She loved Ruth's mix of urban influence and traditional styles and encouraged her to paint without any thought as to who might see the results.

Ruth's bold colours and sharp lines reflect a self-assurance developed over years, explains Alison; her careful attention to detail and purposeful finishing touches allows her to perfect each piece.

"She's a really interesting artist to watch," enthuses Alison. "She is continually putting new work into the world, and it's always a progression from the previous work."

In the coming year, Ruth hopes to hold her first solo art show. She will also launch a range of entry-priced originals that she refers to as 'collectabills': each features a miniature version of one of her designer wallpaper birds. **📍**

For more information, visit www.ruthcadioli.com.