

Wendy makes roses

When Wendy Morray-Jones went looking for a new business venture, the answer was right under her nose...

BY LINDSEY HARRAD PHOTOGRAPHY BY NIC HARDING



'I've always had a strong entrepreneurial streak,' says Wendy Morray-Jones. 'I'm always ready to try my hand at something new.'

'When my son Charlie was young, I had small businesses, work that I could pick up and put down, and plan around him. But I've also got a creative head and I liked to have other little projects on the go.'

'I used to appliqué motifs onto Charlie's clothes, for example, and the other school mums loved them. So I decided to buy a licence to reproduce the Rupert Bear character and started selling jumpers.'

DRAWING ON THE PAST

A fascination with history became the basis of a card-making business, Loud & Jones, run in

partnership with Wendy's American friend, Pat Loud.

'We both loved the quirkier side of history, the eccentric details. One of our favourite cards focused on the Georgian custom of beauty spots. People often don't realise that these patches, which were usually made of real mouse skin or moleskin, were in vogue for over 150 years, or that they conveyed different meanings. For example, a spot worn near the lip was called a coquette and was considered flirtatious. Our cards included a strip to try out. They were great fun.'

The cards sold widely in historic venues, from Bath's Royal Crescent to Hampton Court and the V&A museum shop. But after a spell running the business on her own when Pat returned to the

States, Wendy was ready for a change.

In the interim, she had found a new craft hobby. She'd seen some paper roses in a magazine. 'I loved them – they were nothing like those unnatural-looking silk ones.' Wendy bought some and spent the next six months deconstructing them and learning how to make them herself. She also redesigned as she went.

'The ones I'd bought were hydrangea size but I wanted them to be life size and even more authentic looking.'

THE NEXT STEP

Wendy devoted considerable time and effort to perfecting her technique of dyeing crepe paper to achieve realistic shades, driven by a lifelong passion for tea roses.

'My grandparents had a wonderful rose garden,' she recalls. 'Even as a child I loved sitting there on warm summer days, soaking up the delicious scents and colours. All my designs are based on hybrid teas, so they are crafted from 48 petals just like the real thing, and the colours are inspired by real vintage roses for a very authentic result.'

Over the next decade Wendy turned to developing properties in Bath and Devon, before returning to Bath nearly six years ago. She now lives in nearby Bradford-on-Avon with her partner Nic.

'During that period making roses was very much a hobby, a creative outlet in my spare time. I made bouquets for half a dozen weddings and a number of birthdays.'

Then in 2010 her handiwork appeared in Louise Moon's Natural Wedding Book (published by Sawday's), which led to regular commissions and a deluge of requests for workshops. At this point Wendy realised she had the basis of a new business.

PASSING IT ON

Although she had spent years refining her rose-making technique, Wendy maintains it is a skill that anyone can acquire to a basic level

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