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# On the surface

Kate Usher makes super-luxe wallpapers, hand-embellished and sought-after. She's one of the creatives who make up Joanna Feeley's trend panel



Kate Usher is quietly making a name for herself in the world of interiors. She's one of regional designers who make up Joanna's Feeley's 'trend panel'; a team of creative folk whose ideas often find their way to the influential Trend Bible and, some way down the line, perhaps to your own bedroom wall.

Maybe even Lily Allen's wall. The singer gave her seal of approval to Kate's work at a design trend show in London. Joanna is keen to support and encourage local talent and Kate Usher's design work has been used in Joanna's forecasting.

Kate's unique wallpapers have been creating quite a buzz – her meerkats paper being featured in plenty of cool interior magazines and online design sites for example. Her bespoke, hand-printed and decorated papers are intricate, eye-catching and tactile – from a soft flock feel to the retro sweetie shop design with dazzling decoration.

Kate is based in Gateshead at The Shed, a creative workspace hub for some 30 small businesses. It's here that she's upping the game with her business, Kate Usher Surfaces and hoping to expand her range of products and grow the marketing of the company.

The 25-year-old studied design at Newcastle College then did a textile and surface design degree at Cleveland College of Art & Design where she did a placement with wallpaper designer Harlequin.

She loves interiors and was inspired to create her own wallpapers to give a quirky kids' theme without the predictable palette of sugary colours and designs. She has two children, Joel and Milo, and was keen to get their seal of approval too.

"I love meerkats", she laughs. "Joel liked what I was doing with the animals – the idea is to have a design that appeals to adults and children alike."

A £150 a roll she is looking for some sophisticated walls. The price reflects the intricacy of the process of making the rolls and the embellishment.

The designs are first hand-drawn then scanned before being digitally printed and then flock-printed or decorated with crystals. It makes the papers as much a work of art as a conventional painting and they act as a stand-out feature in any home.

Her papers are getting a huge amount of attention in design magazines and trend-led websites. She'd love to see the wallpapers used in a boutique hotel or restaurant setting to show their impact.

"People don't think twice about spending money on a wall canvas – I think the paper makes more of a statement than that."

She's even had a voice of support from Lily Allen.

"At the 100 per cent Design exhibition she came over and said she loved the papers. She was really encouraging."

For the future Kate is looking to expand her range to feature fabrics-but wallpaper holds her heart.

"Surfers, koalas, penguins – I want to put things on wallpaper that have never been there before!"

#### Kate Usher Surfaces

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