

## Artist Spotlight: Dean Crouser

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Dean Crouser's distinctively vibrant watercolor artwork adds the beauty of nature to a wide variety of DEMDACO accent décor, brightening homes and gatherings for nearly any occasion. Items in his collection include unique art pieces, keepsakes and serving ware, featuring lively natural scenes, wildlife, floral and songbird motifs.



We know Dean Crouser as the imaginative artist behind popular mugs, lamps, vases and wall art — all vividly adorned with his paintings. A true master of watercolor and making everyday objects stunningly full of life, Dean is also known as a star of track and field — he was a three-time NCAA champion and still holds school records in discus and shot put at the University of Oregon, where he is in the school's Hall of Fame.

### **What got you interested in art, and when did you start painting?**

I started drawing and painting pretty much right from the start. I loved to draw as a little boy and always had a bunch of coloring books. At the age of 10, I received a real watercolor painting set for Christmas where the paint came in tubes as opposed to the cheap, hard pans. It was the best gift I ever received.

### **What is it about watercolor that has kept you interested?**

There is a natural beauty to watercolor that has always intrigued me. It relates to the way that watercolor comes alive on the paper — it mixes, it bleeds, it interacts with other colors and has a life of its own. It must take place before the water and pigments dry which is just a minute or two. The results can be beautiful patterns and textures within a painting that you simply could not control, no matter how hard you tried. It's magic.

### **What common elements do you see between competitive athletics and art?**

As an athlete I was always striving to make improvements and get better. When I reached my goal, I automatically upped the bar and set new goals. Looking back, I realize that there truly was no "finish line" — it was a process of pushing yourself to see how far you could go and how good you can be. I certainly feel this same way with my art as I am constantly trying to get better and improve. I guess the flip side of this is that you are never satisfied with what you do — and I am certainly my own worst critic.

### **Nature plays a big role in your paintings, but what else inspires your work?**

I am inspired by whatever catches my eye. Literally. Right now, I am on the Sea of Cortez in Mexico, looking at a beautiful palm tree in front of the ocean. I know when I return home, I will

paint a palm tree. Whether someone else will be interested in it or not is okay; I just want to paint a palm tree.

**Explain your fascination with nature and why are you compelled to paint it?**

I am so drawn to the color and beauty that is easy to find in nature. We can go fishing in a small creek and my daughter will catch a little six-inch trout and before she can release it, I will say “wait, let me see that little guy.” I am always amazed at how close these amazing critters are like little jewels and can stop me in my tracks. Not everyone gets as excited about seeing a fish as I do, but these types of things inspire me. Birds and animals are the same — I get caught up in what I see before me.

**Have you ever tried painting subjects not related to nature?**

Absolutely. I have painted portraits, athletes, trains, still life with fruit, etc. This summer I even did a painting of a U.S. Supreme Court justice while fly-fishing, which was a bit nerve-wracking (but he sent me a very nice note regarding how much he liked the painting).

**About DEMDACO**

For more than 20 years, DEMDACO has designed and sold giftable products intended to “Lift the Spirit” — in times of celebration, when comfort is needed, or just to put a smile on someone’s face. The hand-curated artisan gifts it develops and distributes are chosen for their potential to help people nurture goodness in the lives of others, celebrate family and friends and encourage people to treat themselves.