

# BE DARING BE DIFFERENT

An artist and illustrator with a passion for interiors, Luke Edward Hall is the bright young thing who everyone wants to work with, says Kathryn Conway

You can barely open the pages of a glossy magazine or a weekend supplement without coming across an article about Luke Edward Hall. Some might think this wunderkind's rise to fame has been somewhat meteoric given the recent press attention lavished on the interior designer and artist, but Hall is quick to point out that his time in the limelight is down to years of hard graft. "Sometimes I feel people think 'oh, wow, you've come from nowhere', but it has taken a lot of work to get to this stage in my life," he says. Indeed, despite only being 28, Hall's entrepreneurial spirit was formed in his teenage years when, at the age of just 17, he began creating a magazine called *Cake*, a curation of photographs, articles and sketches by Hall and his friends. He then moved to London and began selling painted white t-shirts on Brick Lane and making outfits for his favourite pop stars in his spare time. Then, while studying menswear design at Central Saint Martins, Hall set up Fox and Flyte with his boyfriend and another close friend, creating an online concept store offering vintage wares and *objets d'art* uncovered during the trio's trawl of various antiques markets and auctions.

Given his degree, one might have expected Hall to leave Central Saint Martins with a fully-fledged business plan for a successful menswear brand up his sleeve, but Fox and Flyte's installation at the shop owned by architect and interior designer Ben Pentreath piqued Hall's interest in the potential of interiors and led to Hall working with Pentreath for two years following his graduation. It wasn't

until the autumn of 2015 that Hall went on to set up his own studio and his current practice feels very much an amalgamation of all the ideas that Hall has been exploring to date.

If Fox and Flyte was an expression of the view held by William Morris that having beautiful things in a home could improve the quality of one's life, then Luke Edward Hall has expanded on this by imbuing his works with skill, passion and dedication to ensure they communicate something of himself – a wholly Morrisian perspective on design. Hall's



graduation collection, meanwhile, was based on *Endymion*, a poem by John Keats which is ultimately about a shepherd-prince seduced by a moon goddess, and hints at Hall's love of Greek mythology that is now a central tenet of his aesthetic. Today, Hall's work straddles art, fabrics, ceramics and interior design, making him a modern-day polymath. And perhaps this success lies in the fact that he hasn't tied himself steadfastly to one strand of the arts.

"I straddle different worlds," Hall agrees, when questioned on the issue. "I think some

people can get quite caught up in thinking that, as an artist, you can only work in one field. But I've never really been afraid of mixing things up and working on lots of different projects."

#### INFLUENCED BY THE PAST

This ethos reflects a period that heavily influences Hall's work, a time that he admits he is particularly fascinated by. "I really love reading about people from the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s, like Cecil Beaton, Rex Whistler



OPENING PAGES: LUKE EDWARD HALL IN HIS STUDIO. PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF LUKE EDWARD HALL. THIS PAGE: DESIGN FOR STUBBS & WOOTTON © LUKE EDWARD HALL; A YELLOW FISH LAMP FROM ATOMIC ANTIQUES IN SHOREDITCH SIT'S BESIDE A FIGURE OF MICHELANGELO ON DISPLAY IN HALL'S HOME. PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF LUKE EDWARD HALL. FACING PAGE: DRAWING ROOM DESIGNED BY LUKE EDWARD HALL FOR TALISMAN AT LONDON DESIGN FESTIVAL © BILL BATTEN

and Stephen Tennant,” he says. “They are people I drew huge amounts of inspiration from because they worked across such a broad range of media – from Stephen Tennant, who did drawings but also wrote, to Cecil Beaton, who obviously did photography but then illustrated these amazing book covers and left an incredible body of work. I’ve just always loved the idea of having this aesthetic that you can apply to different things.”

Unsurprisingly, perhaps, Hall is also passionate about the Bloomsbury Group, a circle of English writers, intellectuals, philosophers and artists that included Virginia Woolf, which was formed in the early 1900s. The home inhabited by prominent members of the group – Charleston in East Sussex (which remains as it was during the time of the Bloomsbury Group and is open to the public) – feels like somewhere you can imagine Hall living in; its Bohemian vibe and eclectic mix of styles are something that Hall himself might create. “The Bloomsbury Group is a big inspiration, yes,” he says.

“The ethos, this idea that fine art should inhabit everyday spaces, which is showcased so wonderfully at Charleston, is hugely appealing to me. I love the fact that they painted on lampshades and on furniture – that there weren’t any boundaries to what an artist could use as a canvas. This really resonates with me and is something I try to apply to my own work.”

Hall’s open-mindedness about his work, coupled with a healthy dose of luck, has ensured that he has collaborated with some hugely influential people and brands. Most recently, he has produced a range of 36 original works of art to adorn the bar, lounge and reception of The Bloomsbury hotel, newly refurbished under the judicious eye of designer Martin Brudnizki, and designed the interior of The British Collective, a Christmas gifting pop-up at Bicester Village. “This was a really fun job because the team at Bicester Village gave me free rein to come up with an idea and really go for it with the design,” says Hall. “I’m a big fan of colour, I use a lot of



colour in my work and I thought it would be nice to play on the British idea – our inherent eccentricity and our bravery with design – by turning up the volume and going mad with colour.” The end result had the feel of a lavish country home but with a distinctly 1970s colour palette (think chocolate brown ceiling, red lacquer walls and a flamboyant pink and gold patterned carpet). “David Hicks, the interior designer, is a very big inspiration and I love his jarring colours and amazing geometric patterns,” says Hall. “I just thought it was fun to go over the top and do something quite unexpected.”

It is this drive for the unexpected that best sums up Hall’s work to date. This is why his drawings of Greco-Roman heads and pillars or his sketches of floppy-haired men either lolling about or pictured in idealised scenes of European life adorn everything from a

limited-edition label of one of Berry Bros. & Rudd’s best-selling clarets to hand-painted table linens for Summerill & Bishop. Most recently, you will also find his distinctive sketches rendered as a collection of beautiful embroidered slippers and pocket bags for US brand Stubbs & Wootton.

“From the illustrations I did for Burberry’s autumn/winter 2016 campaign to the curation of the *Young Hearts* exhibition for Christie’s, if the project involves working with someone who I feel is doing amazing things and it’s something that I like, I’ll do it,” Hall says. “Luckily, I’ve had the opportunity to work with some brilliant people, so it’s been incredibly fun.”

And you get the sense that given his work ethic and collaborative prowess to date, there are plenty more fun projects to come from this very modern young British artist.