



ART FARE

FOR PAINTER AND FABRIC DESIGNER LAURA GUNN,
EVERY DAY PROVIDES ANOTHER
CHANCE FOR CREATIVITY TO BLOSSOM

As a young girl, Laura Gunn was immersed in color. Her mother, a dollmaker and fabric designer, has no qualms about mixing hot pink, bright green and every color in between into her home's décor—so Mrs. Gunn grew up flush with the knowledge that color was not something to be tucked away and reserved for special occasions, but rather an important aspect of everyday life.

Now Mrs. Gunn is imparting that knowledge to her own two children, Lily,

8, and Luke, 18 months, by filling the house with her own artwork, as well as the work of the three other young mothers in her "Friday group," which has helped her do everything from painting her walls and landscaping her garden to creating curtains and pillows. Among this year's projects, the group pulled together to help Mrs. Gunn put finishing touches on her living room and art studio.

"For the first time, I feel like my home is really an expression of my tastes," says

Mrs. Gunn, pointing out professional photographs taken by her brother, Isaac Bailey, fabrics designed by her sister-in-law, Heather Bailey, and candy-colored wall accents and handmade curtains and pillows throughout the space.

Mrs. Gunn modestly says she's the joker of the group—but in truth, she's a

PHOTOGRAPHY BY SUSAN JACKSON

fantastic artist in her own right, painting thickly layered, textured and distressed acrylic florals that have been reproduced as a set of limited-edition prints by New Era Portfolio HD, a company that supplies clients including Crate & Barrel and Trump Hotels. A calendar featuring her work, which she designed and had printed at Minuteman Press in Brentwood, is now available online through her website, paintinmyhair.com. And a new line of fabric, Lantern Bloom, based on her original paintings of Chinese lantern pods, is in the process of being produced by Michael Miller Fabrics.

The fabric will first be available at Eureka's Susie Q Quilting this spring; in May, Mrs. Gunn will travel to Pittsburgh with her mother and sister-in-law for the semiannual International Quilt Market. Quilting, crocheting and other '50s-era handicrafts—not to mention fine arts like painting and sculpting—are making a big comeback among today's young mothers, says Mrs. Gunn.

"I think what happened was that when more women began working, some cottage-industry skills, hobbies that you can do from your home, went out of style," she says. "So you have baby boomers who are still quilting, and then you have a generation that's totally skipped. And then you have another generation of women who are missing that creative outlet. So now I think it's coming back."

Apart from simply creating her own art, Mrs. Gunn's beginning to teach those skills to her children. "Art just became such a great natural part of our family life that when I had my son, I really didn't even have to slow down," she says. "I can paint during naptime, I can paint with him around, I can paint after they go to bed and I can paint with my daughter—these are all her little paintings." She gestures to several mini canvases in neon colors that hang in her studio. "Instead of becoming an escape from being a mother, it's just become part of our family."

—BY MARGARET BAUER

SEE MORE OF LAURA GUNN'S ARTWORK AND DESIGNS, PLUS A NUMBER OF EASY TUTORIALS, ONLINE AT PAINTINMYHAIR.COM.

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