

Darren Holdway

Freelance Creative Director | Brand & Content Concept and Design, Specialising in Luxury, Lifestyle, Retail & Editorial | TTL Campaigns | Video & Photography Direction

darrenholdway.com

INTRODUCTION

Highly accomplished, award-winning Creative Director and brand storyteller with 28 years of experience and a passion for crafting compelling, design-led narratives across luxury, lifestyle, editorial and retail. I elevate brands through impactful, cross-platform content and have a proven track record across interiors, fashion, food, publishing and retail. Specialising in launching, rebranding, and redefining creative concepts, I focus on driving audience engagement and commercial growth. Renowned for aligning print and digital strategies, leading high-performing teams, and directing distinctive visual storytelling across video, stills, and campaigns, I combine strategic insight with a hands-on approach to deliver flexible, resourceful, and results-driven creative solutions.

CORE SKILLS SKILLS & EXPERTISE

TTL Campaigns | 360° Brand Development | Creative Direction | Content Strategy | Editorial & Commercial Art Direction | Photoshoot & Video Production | Brand Identity & Visual Storytelling | Print & Digital Transformation | Team Leadership | Mentoring | Stakeholder Management | Luxury, Retail, Interiors & Lifestyle Expertise | Adobe Creative Suite, including Premiere Pro

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

Conceptualising and directing TTL luxury video content for global textile brand **Sunbrella**, bringing the brand's story to life through thoughtful, design-led, long and short-form storytelling across social media platforms.

Collaborated with interior designer and TV personality **Leanne Ford** on a range of creative projects – from launching her Ozzie Award-winning magazine, *Feel Free* to designing her bestselling book, *The Slow Down*. I've also designed her second title, *Feel Free Home*, which launches this year, continuing to shape her evolving brand voice.

Working closely with HGTV's **Grace Mitchell** on her debut book *Storied Style*, guiding the visual identity and creative direction to reflect her unique design sensibility.

As Art Director at **John Lewis**, I was part of the Creative and Content team leading the creation of seasonal campaign imagery across online, in-store, and ATL, working with key stakeholders to redefine and evolve the brand's imagery.

Conceptually led and directed seasonal campaigns for **Not On The High Street**, highlighting the platform's community of artisanal makers. These complex, multi-location shoots called for creative agility, strong logistics, and a collaborative approach to storytelling.

Strategised and rolled out a full 360° rebrand of **Country Living**, uniting print, digital, and experiential channels to deepen audience engagement and open up new commercial partnerships with brands like DFS, Yeo Valley, and Interflora. Off the back of that success, I was launched **Modern Rustic**, a luxury offshoot aimed at a younger, design-savvy audience. It quickly grew into a triannual title, and launched in the US within two years.

As founding Art Director of **Jamie Magazine**, I helped redefine the perception of food publishing in magazines – pairing tactile, offest paper and art directing stunning, reportage-style photography with world-class food photographers. The launch issue sold over 100,000 copies.

Darren is a talented creative director who, in his time at Swoon, led the team in producing our **strongest ever lifestyle photography shoots** and designed **engaging and innovative new advertising** formats

NOEL EVES, CMO SWOON

I've worked with Darren for many years, he always brings out the best in his team, tons of creativity and flair. **He has a real eye for the unusual and beautiful**, I particularly loved his work on *Modern Rustic*, championing the one-off crafts people/makers, bringing their individualism for all to appreciate. There is never a dull moment on his projects. **I have done some of my best work with him** and look forward to more adventures

WEITANG, STYLIST

I have worked with Darren numerous times over the years, for various clients. His briefs are always creative, **detailed and considerate of my working methods** and visual approach. He allows a project to develop naturally, giving the whole team room to have creative input. No matter how long the day has been, Darren is always positive and quick to laugh

CHRIS TERRY, PHOTOGRAPHER

CAREER HISTORY

APR 17 –
ONGOING

Freelance Creative Director | Key Clients & Projects

- **Sunbrella** Ongoing Consultant Creative Director, conceptualising and directing TTL luxury video content that brings the brand's story to life through thoughtful, design-led long and short-form storytelling across social media. Focus areas include partnerships, production processes, and craftsmanship.
- **Grace Mitchell (HGTV)** Leading creative direction on her debut interiors book *Storied Style*, shaping its visual identity and narrative.
- **Hello!** Consultant Creative Director responsible for aligning print and digital strategies, elevating photography and photoshoots, and streamlining workflows. Recruited and mentored a new creative team.
- **Reach PLC** Delivered strategic brand vision for the Creative Content Hub, led a team of nine designers, and spearheaded the redesign of *OK! Magazine* and rebranding of *OK! Beauty Box*, driving subscription growth and stronger campaign performance through cross-platform, data-informed photoshoots.
- **Leanne Ford (US)** Ongoing Consultant Creative Director with interior designer and TV personality Leanne Ford, launching her Ozzie Award-winning magazine *Feel Free*, designing her bestselling book *The Slow Down*, and her follow-up title *Feel Free Home* to evolve her creative voice.
- **A360 (US)** Conceived and launched print and digital titles for lifestyle and food brands including So Yummy, Joy the Baker, Emeril Lagasse, The Beet, and Motherhood, defining their editorial voice and visual direction.
- **Dulux (AkzoNobel)** Led global campaign creative for Dulux Colour Futures 2022, integrating video, animation, and social content into a high-impact pre-launch and launch campaign showcasing expertise in multi-channel storytelling.
- **Not On The High Street** Strategised, storyboarded, and directed branded video, animation, and stills content to highlight artisanal makers and seasonal campaigns including Father's Day.
- **Unilever Food Solutions** Developed narrative frameworks and directed a chef-led video series for a professional culinary subscription platform. Also conceptualised and art directed food photography for Knorr's social channels, blending creativity with commercial impact.
- **Tesco** Partnered with the Head of Marketing to define a new seasonal photographic style for brochures, online, and in-store. Led art direction on packaging imagery for a food range refresh, ensuring consistent brand alignment.

OCT 21 –
SEP 22

JOHN LEWIS Art Director, Home

Working collaboratively with Creative and Content stakeholders throughout the business leading the visual evolution of this iconic brand.

- Responsible for conceptualising and art directing seasonal creative shoot campaigns for in-store, ecommerce, social and editorial platforms within home and lifestyle. Also working with designers such as Matthew Williamson, translating their vision and aligning to brand guidelines

JUL 18 –
OCT 21

PURPLE DRAGON Creative Director

Brand ambassador for an ultra-high-net-worth private members club, driving strategic brand evolution and creative execution across print, digital, experiential, and product channels to support global expansion.

- Developed and led a full 360° brand identity refresh across all touchpoints, preparing the brand for international growth.
- Implemented seasonal cross-channel campaigns and events throughout the year in-club, online and in print.
- Produced and directed 70+ videos for the digital TV subscription channel *At Home With...*, designing a mobile studio solution during COVID to film art, music, STEM, and cookery content efficiently and creatively.
- Enhanced expertise in lighting, filming, chroma key, Adobe Premiere, video editing, illustration, and animation.
- Conceptualised and art directed seasonal video and photoshoots for fashion, lifestyle, and food across social and print platforms.
- Launched a quarterly ABC1 members' magazine, securing premium advertisers including Harrods, Stella McCartney, and Patek Philippe.

JAN 17 –
APR 17

SWOON EDITIONS Creative Director

Strategised and led the rebrand development and defined a new photographic style which was rolled out with the Spring '17 digital and brochure campaign which lead to Swoon becoming a household name. Developed my team and working practises to take us through the next phase of growth.

- Oversaw chemistry meetings to shortlist an Advertising agency for further brand development to take Swoon to the next level for advertising and TV campaigns
- Conceptualised and coordinated a two-week Swoon pop-up event at the Oxo Tower, showcasing the Spring/Summer 2017 collection
- Managed a team of seven comprising of retouchers, head of design, copywriter and project manager

JUN 13 –
DEC 16**COUNTRY LIVING** Hearst Magazines UK

Creative Director Demonstrating leadership and strategy, I led the 360° redesign of this iconic homes brand, transforming its print and digital presence to become the market leader under my tenure. Championed strategic vision and stakeholder collaboration to expand Country Living's brand extensions with partners like DFS, Pashley, and Interflora.

- Directed the 2014 relaunch including the magazine redesign, development of launching Country Living's website, an online general store, and TTL advertising and experiential design for Country Living fairs.
- Produced and directed ambient and practical videos supporting key editorial themes such as gardens, crafts, smallholdings, and food, increasing engagement across channels.
- Introduced streamlined creative design processes that boosted team efficiency by 25%, fostering a motivated, high-performing creative unit.
- Launched Modern Rustic, a luxury sister title that expanded to thrice-yearly issues and successfully launched in the US by its second year.
- Enhanced editorial scope by leveraging strong photographer relationships to produce evergreen video content for online and social media, maximizing brand reach within existing budgets.
- Rebranded the 1990s concept Farmer Wants a Wife into the dating site Country Loving, which evolved into the BBC2 show Love in the Countryside hosted by Sara Cox.
- Collaborated with Dating Lab the team behind Guardian Soulmates, to develop the desktop and mobile UX.
- Redefined contributor rights and fee structures with photographers, illustrators, and picture libraries, establishing standardised all-rights agreements that delivered significant budget savings and digital flexibility.

NOV 11 –
JUN 13**RESULT Creative Director**

Agency Partner for Morrisons and New Business Development. Led the creative vision and delivery across all multichannel output for Morrisons and other client accounts. This role demanded strong leadership, emotional intelligence, strategic thinking, and the ability to navigate a challenging client and CEO dynamic while inspiring and developing a high-performing team.

- Relaunched Morrisons Magazine, elevating visual standards with top-tier photographers, food and prop stylists. Also launched a new online platform and the UK's first supermarket iPad magazine, earning DMA's Best Customer Magazine for three consecutive years.
- Built trusted client relationships, combining resilience with persuasive communication to align stakeholders around a bold creative vision that transformed Morrisons into an award-winning print and digital offering.
- Secured and developed new business, producing iPad magazines, luxury print catalogues, and custom content for additional clients.
- Oversaw Result Pictures, directing brand photography and video content for Morrisons, defining a consistent, elevated visual language across campaigns.

NOV 08 –
JUN 13**Freelance Senior Art Director**

Collaborating with a range of high-profile clients, these roles demanded creative vision, strategic thinking, strong relationship building, and the ability to work independently with flexibility, decisiveness, and commercial awareness.

- **Forward / Karmarama** Conceptualised TTL print and marketing collateral to complement B&Q's 'Love Your Room' TV campaign, aligning messaging across channels.
- **Laura Ashley** Brought in to inject a more editorial aesthetic across fashion and home titles; redesigned the main homes catalogue to better reflect the brand's evolving audience.
- **Seven** Strategised and pitched the winning concept for **House of Fraser's 'Wonderland'** luxury Christmas guide, art directing 20+ fashion, lifestyle, and interiors shoots. Contributed to the launch of **Virgin's iPad magazine, PROJECT**.
- **AB Publishing** Design consultant responsible for redefining creative workflow and improving production efficiency. Launched a graduate photography competition with LCC, resulting in quality gains and cost savings, employing in-house graduate talent. Several launches and redesigns contributed to multiple IOIC award wins.
- **Sunday** Conceptualised, designed, and commissioned bespoke illustration for Westfield's luxury store guide, balancing editorial flair with commercial appeal.
- **Big Fish** Art directed Waitrose's luxury desserts range, elevating food packaging design with a focus on premium feel and shelf appeal.

JUL 08 –
NOV 08**JAMIE OLIVER LTD Founding Art Director**

- Crafted and led the launch of **Jamie Magazine**, redefining the perception of food publishing in magazines, art directing stunning, reportage-style photography with world class food photographers, pairing with tactile, offset paper, a custom typeface, gatefold pull-out, and bellyband device to hold the **Jamie at Home** publication of which I oversaw the end-to-end creation of, from concept, art direction, design and launch.
- The magazine's launch issue sold over 100,000 copies and led to international licensing, expanding the Jamie Oliver brand's global reach through design-led storytelling.

I brought Darren on board as Creative Director of Country Living to carry out a complete redesign. I chose him over a number of other candidates because his work was **bold and striking** which added a completely new look to the brand. We worked together for three-and-a-half years, during which time Darren showed himself to be a **committed, hardworking and highly creative individual**. He worked across all aspects of the Country Living brand from print and digital to video and events. His design work for print was also extended to a new publication, *Modern Rustic*. This **gave the brand a much more contemporary feel** and is still **highly successful today** using the design Darren created.

SUSY SMITH, GROUP EDITORIAL DIRECTOR, HEARST MAGAZINES

EARLIER CAREER

SEP '06 – FEB '08	YOUR M&S Redwood Art Director
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Led the redesign of Your M&S Magazine, redefining the brand's food and home photography style by introducing world-class talent and elevating the overall visual tone. ■ Oversaw art direction across the magazine and all key seasonal brochures, ensuring brand consistency across print touchpoints. ■ Launched seasonal spin-off titles for fashion and food, recruited and led a new art team, and conducted a full review of budgets and workflow to improve creative efficiency.
SEP '05 – SEP '06	4HOMES MAGAZINE Media 10/Channel 4 Art Director
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Devised and launched Channel 4's first newsstand magazine, crafting a bold visual identity that captured the broadcaster's signature irreverent tone. ■ Led concept development, design, commissioning, and production while managing a small team and maintaining close collaboration with stakeholders and Channel 4 brand teams.
2003 – '04	INK Group Art Director
2000 – '03	OLIVE BBC Worldwide Freelance launch Art Editor
1998 – '00	THE GUARDIAN GUIDE Freelance Art Director
	HARROD'S CHRISTMAS GUIDE & HARVEY NICHOLS Redwood Art Director
	VIRGIN INFO River Publishing Art Director
1997 – '98	FREEMAN'S OF LONDON Senior Graphic Designer
	THE INDEPENDENT Designer

EDUCATION

1994 – '97	BA Combined Honours DESIGN STUDIES & AUDIO-VISUAL MEDIA (1st), University of Central Lancashire
1992 – '94	BTEC GRAPHIC DESIGN incorporating A 'LEVEL ART , Preston College
1991 – '92	Foundation ART & DESIGN, MEDIA STUDIES, PHOTOGRAPHY , Preston College

ADDITIONAL SKILLS & INTERESTS

- Enjoy staying active and embracing the challenge (and occasional struggle) of regular personal training sessions.
- Always curious and keen to upskill, developing my software knowledge including Premiere Pro.
- Have a strong passion for interior and garden design; I've recently completed a full home renovation and garden project and occasionally take on bespoke projects for private clients.
- Proud dog parent to three energetic Border Collies – Dylan, Ziggy, and Freddie – who accompany my partner and me on long coastal walks, countryside hikes, and European road trips.
- A true enthusiast for food, culture, and creativity – from hosting dinner parties and discovering new restaurants, to enjoying gigs, theatre, and photography exhibitions.
- Passionate about the local artisans in my area, and love getting hands-on with creative workshops – whether it's wreath making at Great Dixter, basket weaving at the village hall, or lantern crafting in an artists studio.

When I have work that requires a creative lead, **Darren is always the first person I call**.

He is **wonderful to work with – creative and collaborative**. In terms of his creativity he has natural flare but also impressive background experience that instils trust and confidence. **He also enjoys exploring new boundaries, learning new techniques, and setting new trends**. As for the way Darren collaborates; in the many years I've worked closely with him, he is a good leader, encouraging and fair to those he manages. **Teams enjoy working with Darren and he is impressive when pitching ideas and creative projects to clients**. He listens well to feedback and works hard to make sure what he delivers is as close to perfection as possible.

DAWN ALFORD, AGENCY CONTENT DIRECTOR & EDITORIAL DIRECTOR