



## Life in the Tree House



## February

The month of love, pancakes and the hubby's birthday, February always disappears a bit too quickly for my liking. I will be swapping out my usual painting skills to decorate the living room in preparation of our new sofa delivery at the end of March. We've gone for a nice stormy grey/blue/green which should work well with all the other elements downstairs and once the sofa's are in, I'll share a photo of the finished room. This is the first of a few projects for the house this year, some of which we've been wanting to get done for years so it's pretty exciting to be able to get on with them at last. Next on the list is replacing our porch, redesigning our back garden and getting a garden office .. or artist's studio as I like to call it!



## Artist's Notes

I have to confess, I've not had as much 'creative' time as I'd have liked so far this year. Learning all about newsletter creation, adding pins to Pinterest, researching Substack have all been eating into my studio time. All a necessary part of building a business, but quite time consuming, especially when things go wrong and you have to figure out why! I've managed to work on one painting (the lilies mentioned in January's newsletter), but it's still not quite where I want it to be yet. I've added too much detail and I want it to have a looser feel so more work to do yet. It's getting there, but I think because I had quite a long break after starting it, it's going to take a bit of work to get it to where I want it to be. Sometimes it can lose its energy and spontaneity and it's hard to get it back. I may need to do something dramatic or wreck it a bit to get it back on track, but as I said last month, it will be good to get it finished and as we start to emerge from the dark winter months, I'm definitely beginning to feel more energised and inspired and can't wait to get going, making all of the ideas floating around my head into some kind of reality. Unfortunately though, the living room decorating has to come first so better crack on!



## Spotlight On ....

The colour Red. Whether you celebrate it or not, it's quite hard to ignore Valentine's Day completely and the colour that most widely represents 'true love', but how has this come to be and what is the meaning of the colour red? Well, as it is the colour of blood, it has historically been linked to power, sacrifice and danger. Think along the lines of Roman Generals, Army Uniforms, Remembrance Poppies, Kings, Cardinals and Traffic Lights. In Chinese culture, red is the luckiest colour and is a symbol of joy, celebration, success, vitality and good fortune, but here in the West, is also associated with passion, heat, anger and sexuality. Think of 'being in such a rage you see red' or 'luscious ruby red lips'.

Red can conjure up a feeling - so a red heart is perfect to convey warmth, love and passion. It also has the longest wavelength which gives it the appearance of being closer than it really is, so it attracts our attention in a 'LOOK AT ME' way! Psychologically, it can make us feel stronger and more motivated and it's the first colour a baby can see. All in all, it's a pretty busy colour, but if it's not your favourite, there are some other colours linked to love such as: white for innocence, charm and purity; orange for enthusiasm and energy; blue for calmness and loyalty; pink for admiration and gentleness and purple for devotion and bonding. So it doesn't have to be red roses!



## What's Inspired Me

February is usually the month that I concentrate on health and lifestyle. Is it because all the Christmas choccies have finally gone? Probably not, as I always like to have some treats in the house. No, I think it's just when I feel like it's time to get a bit healthier after a nice chilled rest in January and with the light starting to change and the days getting longer, I think I just start to feel like coming out of hibernation! Anyway, here's what I've been catching up on this month.

### Currently Reading:

Away with the Penguins by Hazel Prior. An enjoyable read and well written as the main character, Veronica McCreedy, was a thoroughly unlikeable, judgemental, cantankerous and very rich old woman whom I didn't like or care about for the first third of the book. Her long lost grandson, Patrick, seemed kind, down on his luck and lacking any direction in his life. When the two found each other there was quite a collision with the damage looking like it was beyond repair.

However, after watching a documentary about the Adelie Penguins, she decides she wants to donate her millions to the conservation project that looks after them in Antarctic and proceeds, against everyone's wishes, to spend three weeks there!

This is when the story starts to warm up with the help of Terry, one of the scientists on Lockett Island. She brings out the best in everyone and slowly Veronica starts to be a bit kinder and a much more likeable person and the story unfolds to reveal what's caused the emotional shut-down and lack of belief in people.

I liked all the characters in the end and the story wrapped up well, which was why I was a bit surprised to find there is another book which takes them on another adventure. I'm not sure there's enough in the characters to keep me interested though so I'll give that one a miss.

David Mankin Remembering in Paint by Kate Reeve-Edwards. David Mankin is a contemporary abstract landscape artist based in Cornwall and this is a gorgeous book detailing his creative process. I really like his work and find it really interesting to see how other artists paint - what influences and inspires them. How they develop their ideas, what materials they use, different techniques, all that sort of thing.

I particularly love the way he looks for inspiration all around him. He goes beachcombing regularly and documents both manmade and natural finds by photographing them to create an image library, sometimes printing them out and leaving them scattered in his studio, so there is a constant source of ideas to refer to. Although I don't have a lovely beach to comb on a daily basis, I do find it a good practice to look around, listen, feel and really notice what's around you, even if it's somewhere you go all the time - probably even more so as it's easy to go into sleepwalking mode. When I do this I nearly always end up with quite a long list of things I've noticed which I can use as a reference in a painting and would otherwise have been ignored or forgotten.

## And Listening To ...

Michael Mosley's Just One Thing podcast - well I've kind of binged all of these as they aren't very long, but there are loads of easy things that can be incorporated into your life to keep you healthy or may be even live a little bit longer. Not all of them are for me and some I do already, but there definitely quite a lot that I've added into my week from standing on one leg as I brush my teeth to Pilates!



**Tree House Design**

Based in Teddington, West London

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