



# Life in the Tree House



## July

Well, we've had a pretty busy time over the last couple of weeks as we had a sneaky trip to Yorkshire, our eldest graduated from university, we had a brilliant evening at Kew the Music watching Mika (and even managed to stay dry) and we've been finalising plans for the garden studio, which is due to be installed in August.



## Artist Notes

Now that the garden room is getting closer to becoming a reality, I'm beginning to think about what I really want from the space, and how I can make it as perfectly usable as possible and the best way to do that is to create some dedicated spaces for specific tasks.

Several years ago, I set up a space of my own in the corner of our loft bedroom and it's been great but has slowly expanded down most of one side of the room. The storage has been quite good, as I have things tucked away all over the place, but the biggest drawback has been lack of space to paint as I only have my desk to work on and this limits the size of painting I can create and also means I'm constantly packing up and moving things around if I need my desk space for something else, which is just annoying.

Therefore, my most important, top of the list, no. 1 item, is having a dedicated space to paint – a creative, messy area; a place where I don't have to worry about flicking or dripping paint and somewhere I don't have to pack away at the end of every day. That being said, and so that the hubby doesn't panic when he reads this, I will be protecting the new wall and floor beforehand!

The next key area is probably storage and organisation. Anyone who knows me will know I'm quite an organised person. I like to know I have a place for stuff, and I like to be able to find it again. So, there will be one messy area and the rest will stay pretty tidy.

Most of my current storage works perfectly and will just move down, but we'll be installing some open shelving for books, brushes, paints, crayons, charcoal and other materials so they're nice and easily grabbable.

My desk, which by now should be quite clear, will be reserved for all admin related things, with another workspace/desk/or one long table which can be used for sewing, packing, framing, photographing, spare desk etc.

And that's about it for the key elements for the moment. I want it to be quite a flexible space and I'm sure it'll evolve as we actually start using it, but it's exciting for me... and just another place to snooze for the dog!



## Spotlight On ...

Arty Travels: As we're moving towards the holiday season, I thought I'd write a bit about what I take with me when I'm travelling.

This does change and depend upon a few key things: how we're travelling (plane/train/car); how long we're going for (weekend/one week/two weeks) and what type of holiday (city break/family/activity/relaxation). Because the most important point is to not take too much.

Think realistically about how much time you're likely to have to indulge in some art making. I've learned my lesson over the years of thinking I'll have loads of spare time and then hardly having any or feeling too tired after a day's sight-seeing or walking or I've just got to a good bit in my book and I really just want to read!

It's also worth bearing in mind available space where you're staying – is there a table, desk, a nice garden, a sea view?

Thinking about these elements helps me decide what to pack, keeping it to only the things I'll need. Think of it as a capsule wardrobe for your painting equipment.

So, we've just got back from a holiday in Yorkshire. We were there for one week. We stayed in a remote, quite large cottage with a garden and a desk. We drove there, it was with the family and the dog, and I knew we'd be walking, visiting nearby towns for a bit of shopping and probably wandering around a National Trust property or two, so it was fairly likely that I'd find a bit of creative time in between.

This is what I took with me: ...

- My sketchbook
- Some loose watercolour paper – A4, 2 A5, 2 A6
- My watercolour set – contains about 24 colours with a mixing tray in the lid
- A small set of crayons
- Pencils, three artist fine liners (varying sizes), charcoal pencil, four paintbrushes (varying widths), eraser and sharpener – these all roll up in a case to protect them.

When I went to Paris for a weekend of busy sight-seeing, I only took a small A6 sketchbook with a few loose sheets of drawing paper (size 10cm x 10cm) tucked inside and two artist fine liners because I knew I wouldn't have time to do anything other than a doodle or sketch and I had to carry my bag and keep weight to a minimum.

If I'm away for a longer two week stay somewhere and we're driving, I'll probably add some larger pieces of watercolour paper that's primed before I leave, and a limited palette of three colours plus black and white of acrylic paint as well as my watercolour set. For an acrylic stay wet palette I use a lightweight A4 tray with a damp kitchen towel and some baking paper.

Happy Travels!



## What's Inspired Me

Well, we're not long back from a lovely relaxing week in Yorkshire. I can't deny, we were hoping it was going to be a bit warmer, but such is life. It was very nice to be able to go in term time as, for the first time in 19 years, we don't have any children currently in school, so wherever we went was very peaceful – no queues for anything. It was great!

There was one location that we really loved and that was Farfield Mill. It's a Victorian former woollen mill that is now set up as an arts centre with artists' studios, a shop, tearoom and heritage display. We really enjoyed wandering around the studios, looking at the different styles and ways of working, of course, but it was the feeling of community and friendly creative energy that really made the place. We purchased a couple of things to take home (I could've easily bought more) and made good use of the café – twice actually!

One good thing about having a bit of dodgy weather is that the skies are a lot more dramatic – from big moody monster clouds hanging over the hills to white puffy-fluffy ones against a blue sky. It was very changeable but provided plenty of inspiration for some landscape painting and weather sketching.

Of course, the sky was not the only inspiration for me. I also loved all the shades of green in the rolling hills, the texture of the moss-covered dry-stone walls, the orange poppies we had in our driveway and the way the colours changed in the evening light.

I had a lovely afternoon spent painting and sketching as the rain bucketed down outside. We didn't really mind as we'd already been out for a walk and our extremely old house (some parts dated back to 1300) was very cozy (and probably haunted!).

## What I've been listening to:

I've recently found a brilliant podcast called 'Ask an Artist' which talks about all the practical issues of making art your career. There's loads of information, tips, interviews and advice on there and I'd definitely recommend it if that's your area of interest.

And for a bit of music, I'm quite enjoying The Teskey Brothers - good for a Sunday morning - and Mika, to relive the party we enjoyed at Kew The Music.

Trees x



**Tree House Design**

Based in Teddington, West London