



Life in the Tree House.



November

Well, it's been another busy one here with some things planned and some things not so planned, such as the hubby developing acute appendicitis and earning a nice little getaway in Kingston Hospital for a couple of days! Glad to say he made a full and speedy recovery, and we were back on track for a family weekend away to the Peak District, which coincided with freezing temperatures and snow before Storm Bert came along to wash it all away again. I also had a couple of great days out with our middle one to the beautiful L Cornelissen & Son art supply shop and the World of Tim Burton Exhibition at the Design Museum.



Top Right and Middle Left photo credit: L Cornellsen & Son

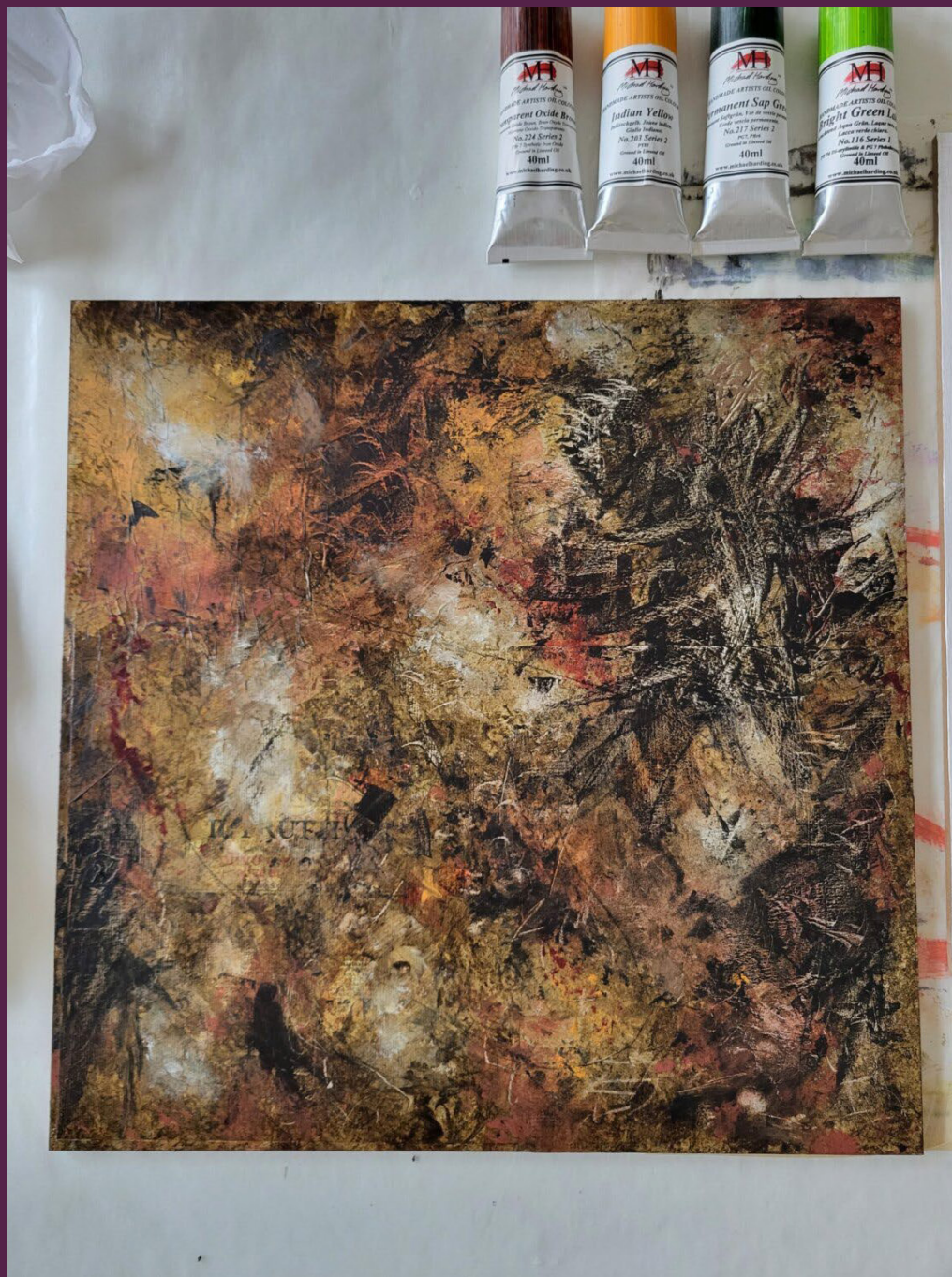
Artist Notes

I suppose it's no surprise that I'm a total sucker for an art shop, whether I need anything or not doesn't matter. It's almost impossible to walk past without a quick 'pop-in to have a look'. All those paints, pencils and pastels in gorgeous colours; tools and brushes; new sketchbooks and papers. It's all that creative possibility that I can't resist.

So, when an artist that I follow online mentioned L Cornelissen & Son in a post, I did a little search and found the most beautiful art shop on Great Russell Street in London, and it went on my list of places to visit, which I did try about a year ago as we were up in town having a wander when I realised we weren't too far away. Unfortunately, this led to disappointment as it's closed on a Sunday. Had a very good look through the window though and decided a special trip would have to be arranged, when I actually needed to buy something.

Happily, that happened a couple of weeks ago when they posted a 'meet the maker' with Magnus Hardradi, Master Ink Maker, to find out all things inky including foraging for ink making ingredients and how to cut reed pens and quills. Perfect excuse for a visit and I wanted to buy some new Michael Harding oil paints and really needed to see the colours in the flesh rather than online, so I recruited my artistic middle child to come with me for a Monday morning adventure.

The shop was established in 1855 and still has many of its original Victorian fittings, so it's like stepping back in time or something that would be used in Harry Potter. We took our time and had a good nosey through everything before we went and listened to Magnus, who was quite a character and so interesting. I came away with my new oil paints and a new reed pen that Magnus showed me how to cut. He made it look easy, but I suspect I'll lose a finger or two when I try it!



Spotlight On ...

I thought I'd write a little bit about my process of beginning a piece of work as it can seem quite daunting when you're faced with a blank canvas. Where do you start? What do you want to create? What colours do you want to use? There are endless questions that can put you off of starting in the first place.

Before you do anything though, your painting surface needs to be primed with Gesso to create a barrier which makes the surface ready to accept paint and stops it simply being absorbed into the surface. This applies to any absorbent surface, such as canvas or wooden board, if you're going to use oil or acrylic paint and I usually use two coats of Gesso.

Once the boring stage is complete and dry, it's time to have some fun and I start by creating some layers.

This is a gentle start, helping to get you out of your head and takes any pressure off of beginning a painting as these initial layers will be almost or completely covered up.

I usually begin by adding some collage to create a bit of texture or an uneven surface, especially if I'm using acrylic paint, which dries very flat and smooth. If I have a loose idea of what I'm creating, I'll add textured paper in specific places, if not, I quite like to use several layers of very thin wet strength tissue paper letting it crease and create patterns across the surface. It's important to stick and seal this layer and I use Golden Gloss Medium for this. I'll also sometimes use paper with text or colour at this stage too.

After this, I'll start to add base colours. This is the stage where you can really do whatever you want – go bright, go dark, scratch through, scribble, make geometric patterns, go abstract, just see what happens. Then you can keep what you like and get rid of what you don't. Don't get too attached to anything though as it can hold you back if you end up working around one little thing because you like it.

This can be repeated as many times as you like really. If you're using a wooden board, you can sand through to reveal forgotten layers for instance.

Eventually though, you'll start to find the direction you want your painting to take and begin to hone the smaller details.

That's the stage I'm at with the painting above. I'm really happy with the texture, colours and love some of the patterns that have happened. So, let's see how it develops next!



What's Inspired Me

Where we've been ...

We had a fab long weekend in the Peak District arriving to a whole load of snow which continued to fall after we arrived. We knew it was only going to last a couple of days before Storm Bert arrived, so made the most of it. We visited Chatsworth Christmas Market and Light Show, which was very festive. There were lots of creative stalls and plenty of food and drink and the light show was really lovely. There's a great used bookshop in Tideswell, where we were staying, and were showed a book dating back to the late 1600's with handwritten notes inside and you could feel the indentations on the page from the printing press. I love old books, especially if there's some writing in it – names and dates – wondering who they were and what their lives were like.

Another of our day trips to London took us to the World of Tim Burton exhibition at the Design Museum. He is a prolific artist, and his sketches and paintings are quite amazing and a bit disturbing all at the same time. His imagination must be on the go constantly. We loved the sketches behind some of his most famous creations and seeing how they developed and came to life. The exhibition ends on 21st April 2025 so there's still time to go and see it!

What I've been listening to ...

I've recently come across another arty podcast called Laura Horn Art. She's a mixed media artist from Adelaide and is usually chatting to her photographer husband, who is originally from Dublin, so two great accents to listen to! It's very easy-going and relaxing with plenty of useful tips and inspiration to keep me entertained on my walks with Indie in the park.

It's the official start of Winter tomorrow and time to dust off Bublé and Mariah.

Enjoy and have plenty of festive fun!

Trees x



Tree House Design Based in
Teddington, West London