

Crafty NEWS

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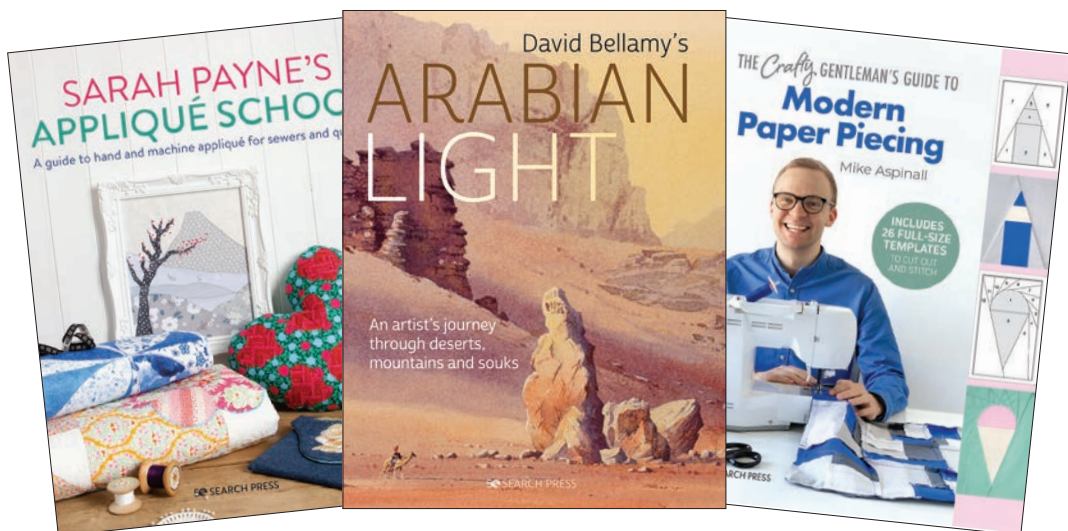


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- BRILLIANT NEW ART AND CRAFT BOOKS
- MEET THE AUTHOR:
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- BECOMING AN AUTHOR WITH
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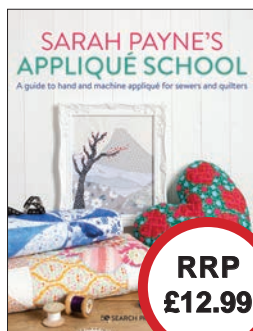
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MEET THE AUTHOR:

Haidee-Jo Summers



*Haidee-Jo Summers is an award-winning artist whose work has appeared in exhibitions worldwide. Her new book, **Plein Air Painting with Oils** explores the appeal of working outside with oils and the enormous benefits it can bring in terms of personal well-being. We caught up with Haidee-Jo to learn a bit more about her work and the inspiration behind her new book.*

Hi Haidee-Jo! For those that don't already know you, can you tell us a bit about yourself?

I've been working as an artist since I graduated with a degree in illustration in the early 1990s. For over 25 years I've also taught painting, in recent years only plein air painting so that is, working with students outside painting from life. I'm now taking a break from teaching to focus entirely on my own work and gallery commitments. My husband and I divide our time between Lincolnshire, where my studio is, and the Lake District where we have a lovely little stone cottage and subjects abound for plein air painting.



We love your new book, *Plein Air Painting with Oils*, what was the inspiration behind the book and how does it differ from *Vibrant Oils*?

When Search Press first asked me to write a book it made sense to write about my approach to oil painting. Although I've worked in many other mediums I specialized in oils at a fairly young age after winning a couple of competitions and in 2015 I was elected a member of the Royal Institute of Oil Painters. In *Vibrant Oils*, I really wanted to show that oil painting can be fresh and colourful and spontaneous, because I think a lot of people have the idea that it must be used in a traditional atelier style method with lots of layers and glazes. Also, I think there is a widely held perception amongst amateur painters that oils must be complicated to use when in fact they're probably the easiest, most forgiving medium.

When I thought about writing another book a couple of years later it seemed natural that I would write about *plein air* painting, because that's particularly been my genre since around 2010. For me, nothing beats the thrill of painting from life outdoors and capturing your subject from life, and I hope to inspire many others to try it. I also wanted to offer advice and encouragement to those who are already hooked!

What is your favourite section of the book?

My favourite section is perhaps painting outdoor portraits and figures, because this combines my love of figurative work together with my love of painting outdoors and this as an area that I see becoming increasingly important in my own work.



How did you first come to painting *en plein air* and what is it about it that you enjoy the most?

In 2010 we took the children and pets to live on a small island in France for a year. I had a break from teaching or any other commitments, and there are no cars on the island so I couldn't drive off anywhere. We only left via the ferry once a week to get groceries at a larger supermarket. So having all the time in the world to sketch and paint and being in this beautiful place is when I really started painting *plein air* more fully, previously it had just been a summer activity.

What I like most about it is threefold really. I feel that being out in the fresh air, and particularly in nature, has huge benefits for my mental health. I also have become rather addicted to the challenges and difficulties of painting outside. No matter what the painting ends up like, the fact that you have conquered so much in the making of the painting really feels like an achievement in the way that painting in a cosy studio never can. And finally, you can have the most extraordinary things happen and meet amazing people (and animals and birds) when painting *plein air*, which really beats always working alone and hidden away.

Can you tell us a little about your process?

How do you go about choosing a new subject or scene to paint?

The various lockdowns over the last couple of years have confirmed to me what I think I already knew, which is that you really don't have to go far to find a *plein air* subject. Having said that I do book in a few weeks away in places such as Norfolk, Devon and the Cotswolds, often returning to the same spots. In May and June all I want to do is paint in beautiful gardens! I may travel somewhere for the day but I don't like to have a plan in advance for what subject I will paint when I get there. I really need to arrive and look around and see what the light is doing, then I'll settle to paint the thing that has the strongest pull.



Do you have any advice for those who are thinking of exploring painting *en plein air*?

I think the main thing is to explore lots of subjects and to find a way of working that really speaks to you. Paint what gets you excited, and that will come across to the viewer of the painting. It is a great challenge at first to paint a subject where everything is changing before your eyes but I offer lots of tips in the book to help with that, like setting a timer so that you don't chase the light and end up painting three paintings in one, and fixing shadows early on in the painting.

What are you working on at the moment?

Currently, I'm working a lot in the studio, on oil paintings of spring flowers and also on semi-abstract interior studies both in oil and

gouache. I'm also out *plein air* painting in the Lake District, it's a beautiful time of year when the trees are still bare, there is snow on the mountain tops and the spring flowers are starting to push through.

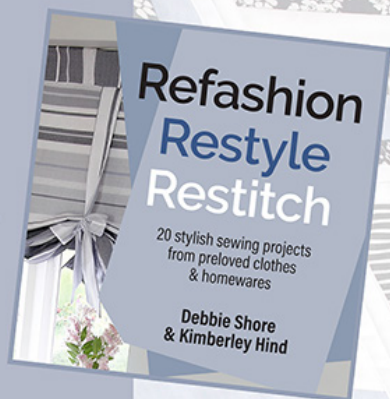


Plein Air Painting with Oils by Haidee-Jo Summers is available from Search Press, RRP £15.99.



BECOMING AN AUTHOR

WITH
KIMBERLEY
HIND



I was so thrilled when I was asked to co-author a book alongside my mum. I've watched her over the years create some beautiful work and publish very successful books, so to start my own journey to becoming an author was something that I never expected.

I learnt how to sew when I had my daughter, Vienna, almost five years ago. I was on maternity leave and fell in love with the idea of making clothes and blankets for her. My mum taught me the essentials and I carried on from that point, starting small by sewing zip pouches and gradually building up to making quilt blocks and simple clothes. My love for sewing grew very quickly, and soon I was making clothes

for myself and writing tutorials of what I was making.

With Vienna growing up and me not being the same size I used to be, I found myself with a lot of excess clothing that wasn't any use to us anymore. I gave a lot to charity but some pieces I wanted to keep because I loved the fabrics! I decided to hold on to my favourite pieces and use them for upcycling instead.

I've been upcycling more the past few years, and I have really loved turning an old item of clothing into something new. It's not only satisfying to save a garment from ending up in landfill, which we know can be harmful to the environment, but creating a unique item using

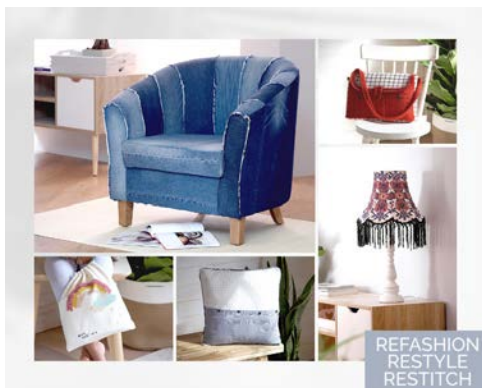
your own resources is very fulfilling. This is what sparked the idea to create a book full of innovating upcycling ideas for the home.

Going into the book-making process, my mum and I didn't want to create a refashioning book that involved turning old garments into other garments; instead we wanted to come up with imaginative ideas and ways of transforming clothes into totally different things. What if we changed a dress into a footstool cover? Or tea towels into a bag? Before we knew it, we had plenty of ideas to get us started.



So, on to sourcing! We had a lot of fun collecting the fabrics and garments for this book. Rummaging through our wardrobes was the first place we started, looking for unwanted clothing or even bedding that we thought would be fun to transform. A few of the projects were decided on after finding an item of clothing that inspired the idea! A summery tassel dress became a lampshade because of its bohemian style, and the tassels were ideal for the trim. We also visited a lot of charity shops to find fabrics and haberdashery. There are some real gems to be found when thrifting, if you know what to look out for. We created a section in the book all about sourcing, because we knew our

readers would like to know more about how we approached this.



We had an equal input in the book's projects, which makes the book a perfect balance of our two styles. Many of the projects we worked on together to complete, such as the bucket chair and the rope basket. The rag rug in particular took a long time to make! Each individual strip of fabric had to be woven into the hessian base using a rag rugging tool called a latch hook. So, both mum and I took an end of the rug and worked our way to the middle! The rug took us quite a few evenings to finish, but the result of all that work is beautiful. The texture rag rugging creates is so soft, and our rug project will be perfect for a kid's room.



A question I always get asked is “how was it working with your mum?” And the answer isn’t as you’d expect! Most would assume that working with family can be difficult at times, with some fall outs here and there, but that definitely wasn’t the case for us. We were both very much on the same page when it came to how we wanted the book to be, right down to the projects and photography! This made the process really enjoyable, and we were so happy with the projects and how they turned out.

Working with the team at Search Press was so interesting. Once we had all the projects finished, we sent them to Emily, the Editor, who then created the page layouts from there. The Designers then created the look and style of the pages. It was really exciting to see the book develop, after a few weeks the first proofs arrived for checking! When all the team had agreed on the final look of the book and were happy with the design, it was a few months until the actual finished version was published. I was ecstatic when the final book arrived through my letterbox, and I can now say I’m an actual published author!

I’m looking forward to working with the Search Press team on more books in the future, and I’m enjoying my unexpected, amazing sewing journey. Thank you for reading!

Kimberley x

Refashion, Restyle, Restitch
by Debbie Shore and
Kimberley Hind is
available from
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