

LET'S TALK ART

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“ I like to arrive with open eyes and choose what arrests me the most, which is usually an effect of the light.”

-Haidee-Jo Summers
Lincolnshire, England

LET'S TALK ART - QUARTERLY INTERVIEWS WITH PROFESSIONAL ARTISTS

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INTERVIEW with HAIDEE-JO SUMMERS



LOCATION

I live in a tiny village surrounded by countryside in Lincolnshire, England. We are about 110 miles north of London. We also have a small house on a tiny island in Brittany, France where we lived for a year in 2011

CAREER

When I graduated in 1994 I started exhibiting my work straight away and returned to university part-time to teach life drawing, as well as working in a picture framers. Within a couple of years I had won my first prestigious prize at the Royal Institute of Oil painters, which encouraged me to continue to work mainly with oil paints. I continued exhibiting in solo and group shows and taught painting classes for adults, apart from a few years when my children were babies. In 2011 we lived in France for a year, and since I came



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back to the UK everything has really taken off for me career wise. I have won 11 major prizes for my paintings in the last three years, and exhibited with the Royal Institute of Oil painters, the Royal Society of Marine Artists and the New English Art Club. I write regular features for The Artist magazine (UK), I am in the process of writing a book on oil painting, and I am producing my first DVD with APV films. I sell work through galleries around the country and am often invited to give demonstrations and workshops. I've enjoyed taking part in plein air events and exhibitions in the US and would love to work more 'over the pond' in future years. Travelling, painting, teaching, writing, events and competitions, exhibitions, marketing, framing... it's an intense schedule but I love it and I wouldn't want to have it any other way!



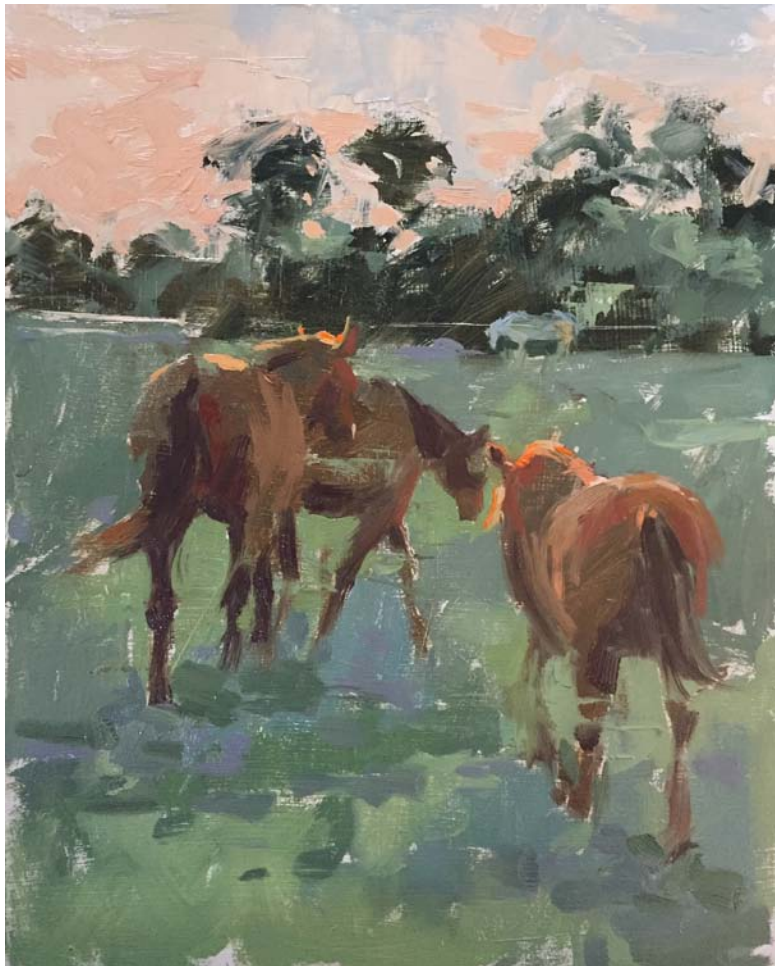
EDUCATION

I knew from a fairly young age that I would continue to study art after school, so upon leaving school at the age of 18 I completed a year long art and design foundation course at York. I was steered by tutors towards illustration because I liked to draw so much.

Afterwards I studied for three years at Leicester's De Montfort University for an honors degree in illustration. It was a terrific foundation for my career as a fine artist. Keeping sketchbooks and painting from the life model was the strongest element throughout the course. I also attended portrait and life classes on evenings and weekends outside of university during my degree course. I didn't even touch a computer but with hindsight maybe I should have invested a little learning there!

WHAT IS A LITTLE KNOWN FACT YOU WOULD LIKE TO SHARE?

My first ever set of oil paints was a prize that I won at the age of 19. I entered a small self portrait into a competition on the Channel 4 TV show 'The Big Breakfast' and I won the first prize which was a wooden studio easel and a case of oil paints. Up until then I had only used watercolours, gouache, inks and acrylics so I didn't have a clue how to use them! That one event changed the whole course of my career. I started using them to paint portraits of friends and around that time I realized I didn't want to be an illustrator, but a fine artist.



MOST OF YOUR PAINTINGS ARE IMPRESSIONIST 'EN PLEIN AIR.' WHEN STARTING A PAINTING, WHAT IS YOUR CREATIVE PROCESS?

Well there are various different streams to my starts, and I'm ever happy to change and evolve. Often my work is location based so it's a case of arranging to be in a certain place and then being inspired by what I see there on the day. I don't like to have a

preconceived idea of the motif I will choose to paint in advance. I like to arrive with open eyes and choose what arrests me the most which is usually an effect of the light. When I'm working in the studio I like to start the day with a small experimental piece on oil paper or board. Some of these become studies for a large studio painting, some I frame up as works in their own right and others are just used as an interesting exercise that gets me loosened up and in the mood.

OF ALL THE LOCATIONS YOU HAVE PAINTED, IS THERE A SPOT THAT IS MOST MEMORABLE, AND WHY?

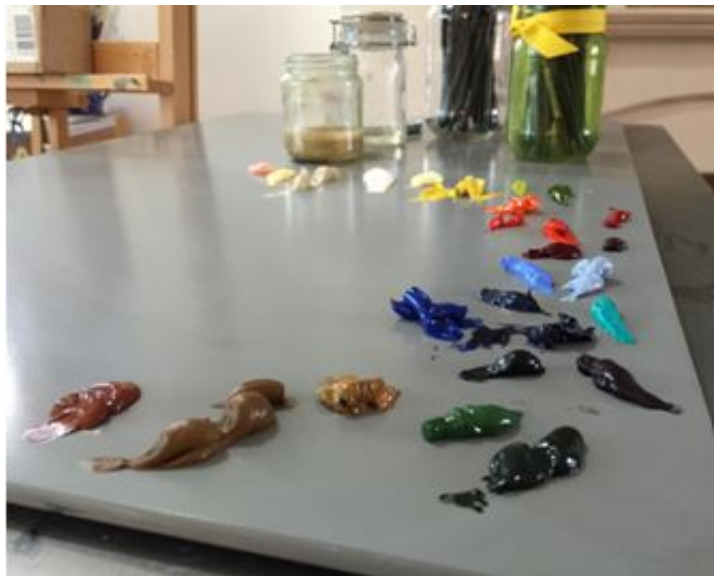
My favorite area in the UK is Cornwall. At the moment I only know a few parts of it quite well and there is much to explore! There is so much variety in the coastline; I could paint there forever and a day. Also Venice is really rather special. When I paint there I feel completely absorbed in the romance of the subjects around me and I feel a connection with all the many great artists who have painted those same streets and canals.



WHAT ARE SOME TIPS YOU HAVE FOR SOMEONE WHO PAINTS OR WANTS TO PAINT IN THE IMPRESSIONIST STYLE?

- Learn to see and work with big shapes first.
- Work across the whole picture surface, don't spend too long on one area.

- Squint to see what's really important.
- Step back, often!
- Hold your brush loosely and use variety in your mark by holding at different points along the handle, and letting the brush turn and dance across the canvas surface.
- Stand to paint, it encourages you to move your whole arm and to step back.
- Try to stop before you're finished. Learn to look out for when you've said "enough." My favorite expression, although I don't recall who said it, is "Say what you need to say in the painting then get out. There is no use chattering on after you've made your point." That's my guiding principle.



WHAT ARE YOUR "GO TO" TOOLS AND WHY?

I absolutely love my studio staple which consists of two grey [POSH palettes](#) side by side on my workstation. But... you can't beat the classic good looks of the [Grand View Confidant palette](#) can you? I still can't quite believe I am keeping a palette clean... it's been two years of use and still looks as good as new!

I try to cut down on paint tubes if I'm travelling light with a tiny pochade box but in the studio I allow myself many indulgences and have a large range of extra colours to choose from. I use mostly [Michael Harding Oil Colours](#) and particular favorites are Kings Blue, Transparent Oxide Red and Unbleached Titanium Dioxide.

For brushes I love [Rosemary & Co's](#) ivory range. They are softer than the traditional hog but firmer than the usual synthetic brushes,

are easy to look after and hold their shape well. I have a plein air brush set available to buy with them which includes the Egbert – a filbert brush with long bristles which makes for beautiful fluid sensuous marks: [Haidee-Jo Summers brush set](#)



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My website is the main hub. I have pages of information about forthcoming events and workshops, as well as galleries of work, a small online store and links to my galleries and suppliers. I also have a sign up form on there for my newsletter which is the best way to find out about painting holidays and other news hot off the press. My website is www.haideejo.com. I can also be found on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#) and [Pinterest!](#)



-Haidee-Jo Summers

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