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Herrings on
willow plate, oil,
20x25cm.



Ollie Tuck

This still life artist finds the beauty in everyday items, painting in oil from her quaint cottage studio in Surrey, discovers *Ramsha Vistro* ▶

HOW I WORK IN THE STUDIO

CREATIVITY IS ONE OF THE DEFINING FEATURES OF Ollie Tuck's family. Her brother is a talented sculptor and model-maker in the film and TV industry, while her mother can turn her hand to many creative mediums from cooking to upholstery; she even made Ollie's wedding dress earlier this year.

Being surrounded by creativity certainly made it easier for Ollie to pursue her passion for art. "I can't think of an exact moment when my love of art began, which means it was always there. I always had the compulsion to create and as I progressed through school, I also became fascinated with art history. Warhol and his studio captured my curiosity, and my exploration of other artists began from there. I was fascinated with trying to understand how it was possible to make a career out of painting because, from an early age, we are consistently told that it is not a realistic career choice," she says.

Ollie began her art journey by painting portraits of friends and family, mainly because those were subjects that she had easy access to. Around the age of 17, she started visiting exhibitions and remembers "being inspired by the BP Portrait Award. I began to discover artists like Benjamin Sullivan, Henrietta Graham and of course, Lucian Freud. I loved studying their brushstrokes and trying to understand how each artist applied paint. We didn't have any formal training for painting at school, so it became a personal process of learning through practice and observation. I quickly realised that colour was a defining feature of my work, and it is this – as well as the enjoyment of paint application – that still excites me; even though the subjects have changed."

She now paints still life, particularly food items, the love for which stemmed from daily visits to her local farm shop and fishmonger during lockdown. "I think we all had to start seeing the beauty in everyday things at that time and I found it mostly in seafood. I love the colours and the light that you can find in these subjects, which aren't often celebrated." She frequently pairs the purchase of her painting subjects with the ingredients for her evening meals, and the fabrics and crockery are all items that she collects and uses in her home. "I always say that I'm not trying to change the world, I'm trying to decorate it."

Ollie tends to work quite quickly when painting, partly due to the fleeting nature of her subjects and partly because there's a



Sunflowers, oil on board, 40x40cm

"certain energy that only exists for me in the early stages of a piece. If I spend too long on a painting, it becomes overworked." She loves working in oils and feels that she still has so much to achieve with this medium and its endless applications. Thus, she has no desire to use anything else – at least for now. While she doesn't lack inspiration, Ollie does have a difficult time moving on from certain subjects. "I always have the desire to paint but would prefer to find it

easier to move onto new subjects quicker. I tend to become infatuated with a particular subject or idea and end up painting it multiple times until I feel I have represented it satisfyingly or until the idea has been so overworked that it is no longer fun to paint."

By contrast, Ollie is rather disciplined in her approach to her working day, out of both nature and necessity. In the early hours of the morning, she walks her Bichon Frise, Monty, so they can settle in for the

rest of the workday. She keeps a comprehensive spreadsheet of exhibitions, commissions and painting ideas that she looks at for focus before she starts each day, and sticks to conventional office hours to combat the separation she sometimes feels from the rest of the world.

"The hardest part of the job for me is working alone. I envy people who have high levels of interaction with colleagues in the workplace. But the benefits far outweigh ▶



Three whole red mullets, oil, 25x30cm

I always say that I'm not trying to change the world, I'm trying to decorate it



Fresh From The Fishmongers, RSM, oil on board, 25x30cm



Cornish Crab, oil,
20x25cm



Asparagus, oil,
20x40cm

the downsides, and I can't focus much in a busy studio anyway. I find that if I am structured and diligent with my approach to the business side of work, I am somehow able to create more free space in both my schedule and my mind for the fun part: the painting."

Ollie paints from the cosy front room of her 16th-century cottage in Surrey, with passers-by peeking in through the large bay window to see what she's working on. Her morning cup of tea is paired with the task of responding to emails on her laptop, while she's squeezed onto Monty's favourite armchair – where he is usually fast asleep – by the fireplace at the other end of the room. She often takes inspiration from behind this chair, where you'll find a gallery wall of small paintings by artists including Amanda Coleman, Tim Scott Bolton and Andrew Farmer. "We bought a lot of these pieces during lockdown, when artists were selling smaller paintings for affordable prices. I love this little collection and frequently look at these pieces for inspiration."

She believes that most artists' works are an amalgamation of all other artists – living and historical – that have inspired them; with the main difference being how these inspirations are processed. "I know that I tend to use bright colours which people seem to be drawn to. However, this is not a conscious decision, it is simply how I see things. Colour is something I have a natural affinity for."

Ollie hopes to create paintings that people will get their noses right up against, to study the brushwork of, before stepping back and seeing it as a whole. She enjoys the constant learning process and development of skills that come through art. "There can be many days and weeks of painting where I feel like I'm not achieving much in my practice. But there will also be days when something clicks and I feel like I have a breakthrough in the way I have approached a subject, and the work feels like it is moving forward. Those days at the easel are pure magic and there is no greater feeling."

She's looking forward to moving to Sussex soon, where she and her husband have bought their first home together; a Georgian townhouse. "One of the main attractions was the space on the top floor where I will set up my studio. After all this time living in a place surrounded by my work, it will be an amazing feeling to be able to close the door on all of the mess at the end of the week. I couldn't be more excited to get into the space and see how the new environment will influence my work."

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HOW I WORK IN THE STUDIO



Scottish
Langoustines,
oil, 15x22cm



Lobster on a
platter, oil,
15x22cm



Fresh Prawns,
oil on board,
15x22cm