

Summer School 2026

'Summer in the Garden at Highdown'

June 29th – July 3rd 2026

Tutors Emily Ball and Katie Sollohub

Cost - £550

This 5 day painting course takes its inspiration from Highdown Garden near Worthing, a unique chalk garden on the Downs. This garden is beautiful and remarkable. In the unlikely setting of a chalk pit the founders of the garden sourced plants from all over the world that would thrive in this habitat. It is a garden full of delights; mature trees and plants, winding pathways that lead to open spaces where you can sit and drink in the sites, sounds and smells. Long summer days are the time to celebrate the colour and abundance of nature. The first 2 days of the course are spent in the garden making lots of studies capturing the experience of this peaceful and inspiring place. The rest of the week is spent at the Seawhite studio where ambitious and expressive paintings will be created using these studies and our memories of the place. Click on the link to have a virtual tour of the garden.

<https://highdowngardens.co.uk/your-visit/virtual-tour/>.

Accessing the garden is easy. It is a short walk on flat ground from the carpark. All the paths in the garden are easy to navigate. There are benches dotted everywhere so that you can pause to sit and soak up the atmosphere and draw in comfort. Above the gardens is Highdown Hill; the gateway to the South Downs National Park.

Course notes

Summer in the Garden

Dates: June 29th – July 3rd 2026

Tutors: Emily Ball and Katie Sollohub

Cost: £550

Times: Monday & Tuesday 10am – 5pm, Wednesday – Friday 9.30am – 4.30pm

Artists to inspire:

Pierre Bonnard

Patrick Heron

Geoffroy Pithon

Anne Griffiths

Hurvin Anderson

Joan Snyder

Joan Mitchell

Joe Packer

Miranda Bolton

Adrian Berg

Tricia Gillman

Emma Biggs

Ivon Hitchens

Elisabeth Cummings

Day 1 At Highdown Garden - Monday June 29th

9.45am Meet in the carpark just outside the gardens. There are toilets next to the gardens and also a cafe. We suggest that you bring a pack lunch each day and a bottle of water.

How to find the garden <https://highdowngardens.co.uk/your-visit/find-us/>

Emily and Katie will provide your materials for you. Katie will start the day with a meditation in the garden. They will then both demonstrate different processes to make studies; mark making that captures the light, depth and foliage. Exploring and finding spaces and forms using colour and collage. Throughout the day they will be guiding and talking to each person individually.

5pm We will gather as a group to review progress.

The gardens does not close until 9pm each day in the summer. If you wish to stay and draw into the evening then that would be wonderful. There is a hotel next to the gardens as well so you could even stay the night to conserve your energy.

Highdown Hotel <https://www.brunningandprice.co.uk/highdown/>

Day 2 At Highdown Garden – Tuesday June 30th

9.45am Meet in the carpark just outside the gardens. Emily and Katie will provide your materials for the day. They will demonstrate further processes to inspire you to make studies in the garden. We will also be writing to capture your immediate responses and observations.

5pm We will gather as a group to review progress.

Day 3 At the Seawhite Studio – Wednesday July 1st

9am arrive at the studio so that you can set up your space and put up all of your studies from the garden. The teaching session will begin at 9.30am.

Emily and Katie will show how the studies can be used to bring paintings of the experience of being in the garden.

4pm Review of the days work

4.30pm Day ends

Day 4 At the Seawhite Studio – Thursday July 2nd

Day begins at 9.30am

Continuing to develop paintings and work in series.

4pm Review of days work and 4.30pm Day Ends

Day 5 at the Seawhite Studio – Friday July 3rd

Day begins at 9.30am (Studio opens at 8am so you can start early if you like)

Continue to develop and resolve paintings

Stop painting at 2.45pm, clear studio and put up paintings.

3.30 – 4.30pm Group review and goodbyes.

If you need to stock up with materials then order through the Seawhite website and collect on the first day at the studio.

<https://www.artesaver.co.uk/>

When you get to the check out enter the code EB10 to get 10% discount.

Gather and prepare your materials.

I suggest that if you paint on paper. You will need a heavy-weight cartridge, I will be using Seawhite's 220gms cartridge paper.

In the Studio

Katie will be working in acrylics and Emily will be working in oils so that they can demonstrate the differences. With acrylics you can work directly on unprimed paper, although you might prefer to prime with a coat of gesso or acrylic paint first. This reduces absorbency.

If you wish to work with oils: the paper does not necessarily need to be sized or primed. Heavier and better quality paper is preferable. You can work straight onto unsealed paper in oils. It stains and dries very quickly. The only thing you must be aware of is that with thick areas of paint, in time, there will be an oily halo appear around the paint, as the oil leaches into the surrounding bare paper. You may prefer to prime your paper with a couple of thin coats of acrylic primer, gesso or household white emulsion.

If you prefer to paint on Canvas or Board

Size and shape is up to you. Perhaps decide this after you have completed some studies. However, bear in mind that we will be working on 12 paintings in the studio so I would advise do not go too big.

Canvas

Stretched canvas on a frame, or loose primed canvas off a roll (this could be wrapped around a board to give a firm surface to work on or stapled to the wall).

Board

Prepared artists boards are fine.

Pieces of MDF from your shed or garage. Priming might be a good idea but some artists rather like the unprimed surface too.

Smooth cardboard or mount board and even corrugated cardboard are options too.

Paints and other materials

These are the colours I suggest you use, in either acrylics or oils. This selection enables you to mix any colour you desire:

Titanium White, Lemon Yellow, Cadmium Yellow, Indian Yellow, Cadmium Red, Alizarin Crimson, Magenta, Cerulean Blue, Ultramarine Blue, Phthalo Blue.

Mediums and equipment for oils and acrylics

Acrylics

Acrylics can be diluted with acrylic mediums, they will increase the flow and transparency of the paint. Some offer the option of increasing the gloss as well. That is up to you.

Oils - In my own studio I never use White spirit or Turpentine. It is highly toxic and smelly. I recommend Shellsol T which you can buy from Jacksons Art supplies or A P Fitzpatrick (this is a solvent which is an alternative to white spirit to clean your brushes with and thin the oil paint). I recommend that you use a 'Drying medium' (to speed up the drying time). I use a 50/50 mix of Linseed stand oil and Shellsol T. I find this mix odourless and very effective. If you cannot get hold of either of these open all your doors and windows to get lots of ventilation and use the mediums you already have".

Brushes for Oils and Acrylics

Have a variety of brush shapes and sizes: Flats, Filberts, Rounds, Liners/Riggers. For bigger brushes I frequently go to hardware and decorating shops. Good makes are Princeton and Omega for large brushes. A few palette knives, paint scrapers or spatulas are useful too, of differing shapes and sizes.

Mixing

A large palette or plastic bowls for mixing paints (ice cream tubs are good).

Other materials

Have a selection of drawing materials available, such as charcoal, pencils, felt tip pens, oil pastels, graphite sticks.

Any queries regarding the things on this list please email emily@emilyball.net with questions.