

ON THE BEACH

Landscape artist Shazia Mahmood has painted around the world, but there's no place like home when it comes to dramatic seaside scenery, as she tells Simone Hellyer

Birdham-based landscape artist Shazia Mahmood recently immortalised her favourite seaside café to help raise money for the RNLI in Selsey.

Shazia has been a regular at Billy's on the Beach café for several years, often stopping in while painting the dynamic coastline stretching from Bracklesham to West Wittering. Some of her final pieces are on display in the café, but now she has put Billy's itself in the picture with a painting that has been turned into a postcard to raise money for Selsey Lifeboat Station.

"Billy's is where my family always comes to hang out because it's lovely and is the closest café to the beach. One of the guys in the café asked if I would be interested

in painting it, so I decided to give it a go. I did it for free in case they didn't like it, as art is sometimes a bit like Marmite and it was the first time I had actually put a building into any of my paintings.

"I love landscapes because they're always changing"

Luckily they absolutely loved it and suggested making a postcard of it, with donations going to the RNLI in Selsey. I was absolutely thrilled about that because I think the RNLI is wonderful – it's crazy that they have to rely on donations, given that they have saved so many lives. Apparently they have made quite a lot of money from the cards so far and are having to make another 1,000 because they have nearly run out," Shazia says.

A full-time painter for the past 23 years, Shazia studied for her masters degree in fine art in Barcelona and has travelled and painted all over the world. But it is the Sussex coastline near her home that inspires the bulk of her work. Her dramatic land and seascapes capture the detail of the coastline's sand dunes and the drama of sea and sky in bold washes of colour and movement.

Speaking about the landscape she loves, Shazia says: "There is something unique about Sussex, especially all around Chichester, Pagham and West Wittering – it's pretty lovely down here. There's a detailed beauty to the coastline and you're never too far away from the sea, plus there's the River Arun and Chichester Harbour too.

"It has also just been a great

Isle of Wight





place to bring up the kids – they love it here."

An experimental artist, Shazia loves using different tools to evoke the landscape around her, often using toothbrushes, sticks, sponges, water and a hairdryer to manipulate the paint. Plus, she often works on the floor so that she can tip the paint around to get an almost airbrushed look.

"If I try to paint a cloud with a brush I find it looks too still and I want my paintings to have a sense

of energy. I love experimenting to try and push the boundaries of paint and hopefully within that you create an emotional reaction. People tend to buy a painting because they have an emotional reaction to it – it could bring back memories, remind them of a holiday or just make them feel something. And if the paint is manipulated in a unique way, then you're more likely to feel something unique," Shazia says.

Shazia also likes to experiment

ABOVE:
Shazia's painting of Billy's on the Beach can be purchased as a postcard

BELOW:
Shazia paints in watercolour while in the landscape

with her choice of paint and loves to find out about new products coming onto the market: "I generally use acrylics and add oils afterwards. Ten years ago that was a real no no, but because acrylics have got so strong with such great pigmentation it's fine to do that now."

One of the standout features of Shazia's paintings is her intelligent use of colour which really captures the many shades of coastal landscape. She achieves this by painting watercolours on location which she then uses as a kind of colour map back in her studio.

Shazia credits the rise of social media for revolutionising the way artists sell work. "I'm often in the local post office sending my paintings off across Europe or America," she says. She exhibits all over the country too with her images of the Sussex coastline but also paintings of Scotland, Norfolk, Cambridgeshire and Cornwall. "I love landscapes because they're always changing," adds Shazia.

Closer to home, her painting of Billy's now has pride of place on the walls of the café and the postcard is on sale priced at £1. ♦



Good to know:

Shazia's latest exhibition will be at the Little Art Gallery in West Wittering from 25 July and you can see more of her work and a great video of her painting in the landscape on her website: shaziamahmood.com