

support small

Discover four beautiful independent brands to support and shop with

SPONSORED



AMBERLEY STUDIO is run by interior designer Alix Stoney who believes that good design turns a property into a sanctuary. With an eye for detail, colour and pattern and an appreciation of craftsmanship, Alix will create a home around how you live and what you love. Covering Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk.
amberleystudio.co.uk | [@amberley_studio](https://www.instagram.com/amberley_studio)



NINFA STUDIO is an Irish-based biophilic art studio aimed at reconnecting people to nature through artwork and interior décor, handcrafted using real preserved plants that stay vibrant for years with no maintenance needed. The art creates a sensorial experience like no other, a unique way to truly connect with the piece and ultimately with nature itself.
ninfastudio.com | [@ninfastudio_com](https://www.instagram.com/ninfastudio_com)



NUTMEG STUDIO began when founder Adele (previously a traditional sign writer) designed some wall stickers for her children's bedrooms. She now produces a wide range of wall stickers, self-adhesive wallpaper, murals and window film for all areas of the home. She also offers off-the-peg and custom window stickers for retail businesses.
nutmegwallartstickers.co.uk | [@nutmegwallart](https://www.instagram.com/nutmegwallart)



PORTLAND AVENUE LIFESTYLE is a homeware, clothing and lifestyle store based in Glengormley, Northern Ireland. Owner Teresa Murray carefully sources both from local makers and designers and those from further afield, for an eclectic and interesting collection, with her main aim being to offer a sense of community and connection for design lovers.
portlandavenuelifestyle.co.uk | [@portlandavenuelifestyle](https://www.instagram.com/portlandavenuelifestyle)



Soap & Salvation

TALKING SHOP

Owned by Jo and Barrie MacPherson, Soap & Salvation in picturesque Rye focuses on sourcing beautiful, uniquely-crafted antique and vintage pieces

Words: Colette Earley | Photography: Nat Aubry



HOW DID YOU MEET?

Jo: We studied fashion design and history of design with practice separately and met whilst working in London for a fashion company. That work led us into other areas of design, including product design and consultancy for a design-led home retailer.

WHAT BROUGHT YOU TO RYE?

Barrie: We originally came to Rye seven years before we moved here. It was our weekend escape from our busy working lives in London. We made the decision to move here permanently looking for a new career challenge and on finding the beautiful buildings, where we now reside, were for sale.

TELL US MORE ABOUT YOUR BRAND...

Jo: We mix antique with mid-century and 1970s, and like unfussy pieces that happily show their past lives. Alongside, we have a library filled with books and catalogues focusing on design, art, photography, fashion and culture as well as some newly created items such as candles and brushes.

WHAT'S BEHIND THE NAME?

Barrie: The name came from the background of the building, which happens to be part chapel, previously offering soap and salvation to those in need. Our business sees us washing, restoring and representing beautiful old pieces – it seemed like a natural fit and also has a light-heartedness to it.

WHERE DID IT ALL BEGIN?

Jo: We started initially with a small online offer which we photographed and sold from our home in London. There were limitations as to the type of pieces we could physically fit in and photograph so we had in our minds that we wanted to find a space where we could develop the business and grow. We were considering a permanent move to Rye or the surrounding area and spent some time looking at different options. We wanted somewhere where we could create a showroom-type scenario alongside a living space. When we were alerted that the space we now occupy in Rye was for sale, we knew almost immediately that it was probably the right place for us. It was only once we had secured it that the idea of having a retail space started to take shape.



WHAT HAPPENED ONCE YOU BOUGHT THE BUILDING?

Barrie: There was a lot of work to do to restore the buildings. First up was the cottage, which we moved into. Then we started work on the chapel and side chapel, which is where our shop and library are based. This is also our space for photography and where we hold events. We opened the shop nine months after moving here – it wasn't completely ready, with the pantry space and library yet to be filled – but it felt important just to get going. You have to start somewhere and then the journey begins.

HOW DID YOU DISCOVER THIS SPACE?

Jo: We had known about it for several years as customers – it had been a shop selling glass and other small collectables. During our long search for a space to grow our business, alongside a move from London, I received an email from a local estate agent with the details of this property. We came down the following day and knew immediately that it was the right place for us as it gave us somewhere to live and a beautiful space to work.

TELL US ABOUT THE SHOP SPACE...

Barrie: Being an old chapel, the space has a vast vaulted ceiling and huge arched windows on either side, so the light is incredible. It has a lovely feel to it – ultimately, it's a very special place to be able to work in.



HOW DID YOU MAKE IT YOUR OWN?

Jo: The bare bones were fantastic - they just needed some love. We had to replace all the windows, but had them copied by a local joinery so they are an exact match to the originals. The carpet came up revealing a concrete floor underneath. We had it cleaned and sealed. In the side chapel, we put in a glazed pantry wall downstairs, and had the walls of bookshelves made upstairs using beautiful old cheeseboards from Holland.

WHAT VIBE DID YOU WANT TO CREATE?

Barrie: We wanted to create something that showed off the space, which meant we didn't need fussy colours or patterns or details. We think we have succeeded with that - so many people come in who knew the space before and think we have vaulted the ceiling or added the arched windows, but they were there all the time! You just didn't really look at or appreciate them.

WHAT MAKES RYE UNIQUE?

Jo: Apart from being very pretty and nestled so close to the sea and beautiful countryside, there is very easy access to London and other interesting and creative places along the south coast. Rye itself has a strong creative community and a fantastic selection of creative businesses. It has some wonderful galleries, decorative antique and contemporary lifestyle shops. It also has some great places to stay, eat and explore. It really is rather special.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE SOMEONE THAT WANTS TO PURSUE A PASSION CAREER?

Jo: Follow your dreams. We all tend to worry about what might go wrong - we don't tend to think 'What if it's a huge success?'. We told ourselves that the worst thing would be that we had to go back and get jobs working for someone else, which wasn't such a bad thing at all. I think that helped take away some of the fear.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Barrie: Our next big project is to restore the stables, which is the last building on our to-do list. The plan is that this will be a beautifully curated stockroom. We can't wait as, at the moment, it's not a space you want to spend lots of time in!

soapandsalvation.com
IG: [@soapandsalvation](https://www.instagram.com/soapandsalvation)