

Blackbird

A feast for the eyes and soul – we take a look at contemporary craft store Blackbird. **BY ADRIAN LITO**



ABOVE: Blackbird's eccentricities are a part of its unique and original appeal.

The crafting world is one in which eccentricities are frequently given room to flourish rather than flounder. Would *Blackbird* be half the crafting sanctuary it is, if its idiosyncrasies were brushed aside in favour of adhering to what society deems 'normal'? In short – no, it would not.

Blackbird is quirky, perhaps even odd, but equally enthralling in its peculiarities.

Perhaps we should start out by saying that there is nary a ball of yarn, nor skein of silk to be found in the immaculate interior of this delightful joint, so if you're seeking a crocheter's paradise, you might have taken a wrong turn!

Yet if you've an open mind, then you might just have stumbled across something that will threaten to not only pique your interest but raid your wallet.

You could never accuse this particular little nest of being *boring* and it's the seamless amalgamation of traditional craft practices and modern day innovative inspirations that will leave you scrambling for more.

However, *Blackbird* is much more than a hand-made oddity tucked away on the East Kent Coast, in fact, if you were to brave the staircase, you'd find that *Blackbird's* actually a hand-made oddity with workspace tacked on for good measure. This workspace allows others the room to bloom, not just as craftsmen, but as creatives.

Yet the workshops aren't what makes this shop such a fascinating place. For that, you need to pay attention to what fills the shelves downstairs, where everything in stock has a unique tale to accompany it. For now, *Blackbird's* a one-woman show but any future staff would need to possess the ability to regale visitors with tales of their products' provenance and in such a way that would do

the items justice – Maxine would not be seeking simple salesmen but real enthusiasts.

It's this enthusiasm and intrigue that permeates the shop, with each unusual piece arousing the curiosity and interest of a regular flow of browsing customers.

With the resurgence of hand-made lifestyles comes an appreciation for all things original. Could it be that the appeal of *Blackbird* is that you're buying something not only classic but contemporary, safe in the knowledge that few others will ever have the same pleasure?

Perhaps I'm simply over-thinking the situation, perhaps *Blackbird's* appeal is simply that its items are wonderful crafting goodies. Perhaps it's a little of both.

One thing's for certain – *Blackbird's* different but not so different as to deter you from coming back, again and again.

Make time today to visit www.blackbird-england.com

