



ART and soul

Cambridge is a muse to many. Alice Ryan spotlights five artists about to showcase their work in *The Heart of Cambridge*, a stunning picture-book tribute to the city.



Cambridge Blue by Naomi Davies, top left
Snowy Day by Roxana De Rond, top right
St John's Street by Emma Bennett, centre right
Round Church by Rebecca Stark, right
Cricket on Parker's, by Susan Abbs, left



To see more of Emma's work visit emmabennettcollage.co.uk. Large limited-edition prints are priced from £17, original art from £45, homeware gifts, stationery, jigsaws and cards from £1.50. Private and corporate commissions welcome – email emmabennettcollage@email.com.

Paper chase

Artist: Emma Bennett

Medium: Hand-cut collage using recycled papers



There's inspiration everywhere you look in Cambridge, from the cows grazing on The Backs and the bees buzzing around the Botanic Garden to the incredible architecture on every street corner. It's visual overload everywhere you go.

I particularly like the challenge of a detailed architectural piece with hundreds of individual details to include; sometimes windows in my pictures can be 2mm high. For a very detailed piece, like my latest Cambridge bird's eye view, I use a photograph and magnifying glass to help me sketch it out, something that can take 18 hours or more. Every individual piece that goes into the picture is then cut/torn by hand and layered to create a canvas painted with papers. Large pieces can take up to three months.

I was incredibly lucky to have four creative grandparents

who taught me to draw, turn and carve wood and create things from textiles. My Nan lived by the sea and we would spend the day combing the beaches to return home to make things from our finds. I now teach art to the elderly, who surprise themselves with their hidden artistic talents. We all have them!

I love vibrant colours and representing things in colours not normally associated with them: why can't a sheep be blue or Ely Cathedral orange and red? I use papers recycled from magazines; *Cambridge Magazine* paper is perfect once read.

After months of intensive building work, I now have an amazing studio at the top of our house. I share it with our Labrador, Barney; conversation over the water cooler is limited.

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To someone like me, who's lived most of my life in Singapore and London, Cambridge is like a fairyland; an idyll in harmony with wilderness. I recently discovered the Beechwoods nature reserve, and am obsessed with capturing the fleeting glimpses of wildlife amongst the gorgeous trees.

Coming from the tropics, I am a wimp when it comes to being outdoors at the mercy of the perpetual Siberian winds! I tend to do quick sketches, take lots of photos and then paint in my studio.

I work with different media - a mix of gesso, acrylic, inks, collage, resin, oil. It's a slow process, as I build up many layers and scratch away until I am happy with the results. I use an arsenal of credit cards, spoons, brushes and palette

knives to slash away at the canvas. It can get quite violent and noisy, which interferes with the podcasts I listen to as I work! *Welcome to Nightvale* is my favourite.

I would describe my style as impressionistic; I like capturing moments in time. I am fascinated with light, which I can't get enough of here.

I've always drawn and painted. I remember drawing on those big sheets of printer paper with rows of holes on either side; my father used to bring them home from work.

I did a sensible arts and social science degree and went on to work in publicity. It wasn't until after I had my second son that I went to back to painting. That was 17 years ago.

This is the best job ever. And I love my commute to work – to my studio in the garden.

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Paint works

Artist: Susan Abbs

Medium: Mixed media



Susan is a member of Cambridge Drawing Society and Cambridge Creative Network. To see more of her work go to susanabbs.co.uk or search Susan Abbs Art on Facebook. Her Camlife series of paintings is showing at Mill Road's Black Cat Café until the end of January.

Just smile

Artist: Roxana de Rond

Medium: Pen and ink and watercolour



One of my favourite places in Cambridge is the avenue of trees on Jesus Green. Somehow it feels like a magical spot no matter what time of year. In November, when the leaves float to the ground like an autumnal snow globe, or summertime when the leaves offer a bright canopy of green, or even in winter when the branches lay bare, it is a beautiful place.

I'm inspired by the everyday and the images I create are often humorous and reflect on feelings of contentment, depicting things like coffee with a friend, walking the dog and reading a good book.

Illustrating began for me when I was a hard-up English Literature undergraduate. In a creative endeavour to give my friends something special that didn't require cash, I hand-painted their birthday cards. I realised

I preferred using images than words to express my ideas.

My work often starts with a flitting idea, sparked by my surroundings and the people in them, jokes, advertisements, bits of overheard conversations. . . After the idea comes a quick sketch for later reference.

As well as 2D pictures, I love making layered images. To create these, I draw and paint the various components of the picture, cut them out, reassemble them, and then layer them up.

Along with cards, prints and originals, I also enjoy making many individual commissions. These can be for birthdays, weddings, anniversaries and other special occasions.

I love drawing people, especially when they're happy. A curious thing is I often enact the expression I am trying to draw; it's quite difficult to draw a smile without properly smiling myself.



To see more of Roxana's work go to roxanaillustrations.co.uk.

To see more of Naomi's work visit naomidaviesart.co.uk or search Naomi Davies Art on social media. Prices for an original work start at £90 or £150, depending on size. Prints start at £25.

Pen and paper

Artist: Naomi Davies
Medium: Pen and watercolour



I have lived all over the world, and nowhere beats Cambridge: the huge skies, the jumble of different architectural styles, the diversity of people and culture, the intellectual stimulation, and, of course, the bicycles.

I find a lot of inspiration in the independent coffee shops – they are the essence of all that is great about Cambridge: the people and the conversations. I never tire of the beauty of the bikes, and also have a soft spot for the very elegant Park Terrace, because I lived there as a student: I came to Jesus College to study history and met my future husband two weeks later. We loved it so much here, we stayed.

I like an unusual 'crop'; an unexpected viewpoint. And I like to draw truthfully –

if there's a wheelie bin or delivery van in the scene, it gets drawn in.

I draw directly in permanent black pen; sometimes a marker pen, sometimes a fountain pen with carbon ink. I love to draw from life – fast drawings with efficient lines. If I feel a drawing 'has legs', I'll watercolour it back at home.

I've always loved to draw and I think in pictures. But it's only in the last couple of years that I've shown my work to other people and have come to understand that I have a talent.

I usually do my painting at the kitchen table, but work everywhere, especially places I have to kill time. I've drawn at the orthodontist, on an aeroplane flight, and even sitting in the car on the Eurotunnel.



To see more of Rebecca's work go to rebeccastark.co.uk. Original paintings start at £300. Limited-edition prints start at £60.



Mixing it up

Artist: Rebecca Stark
Medium: Mixed media



Living in such a beautiful city, surrounded by stunning views every day, I can't resist painting them. The mix of nature and the man-made attracts me every time – bridges over the river, trees around colleges, and of course the bustle of people going about their daily business.

I grew up in Cambridge, but went away to Brighton Art College in the early 1990s. I did a degree in wood, metal, ceramics and plastics, but always kept drawing as my core discipline.

Having graduated I set up a business designing and making metal clocks. But after having my children my desire to draw overtook the clock-making.

I love working in mixed media, as it increases the range of textures and contrast

in my work. I use graphite, gouache and acrylic, to name a few.

My images are sliced up and layered to form collages. I love to play with negative spaces and exaggerated angles, increasing the depth and impact of the image.

I've loved creating for as long as I can remember. Kettle's Yard is one of my favourite places, and has certainly influenced my style. The mixture of old and new, natural and man-made, busyness and space all feature in my work.

Though I start with some sketching on-site, the mixed media and collage is done in my studio at home. I prefer to work on at least two pictures at a time, giving each time to 'rest' and surprise me when I return to them.



By the book

Emma Bennett, the brains behind book project *The Heart of Cambridge*, explains how it came to be.

The Heart of Cambridge will be the first book of its kind to showcase one of the most famous cities in the world through the eyes of 40 incredible contemporary artists and illustrators who live and work here.

Their images will capture not just the city's architecture and green spaces, but also its diversity and daily life. The inclusion of an illustrated map will encourage people to visit the pictured buildings and sites to see how the artist has interpreted them – making this a unique art book and city guide combined.

It was a rare morning spent perusing books in the Tate Liverpool shop that sparked the idea for *The Heart of Cambridge*. I loved the selection of contemporary art books; I don't like random squiggles on paper but love art that shows things in a new way.

I came home to Cambridge looking to buy a book which showed the city in the same contemporary style – but nothing like it exists. That was it. I was off on a mission.

Over numerous cups of coffee with my friend Lynn, a local writer, a plan was born. Within a month I had written a detailed book proposal, built a website for the project and signed up a panel of top local art and city experts to select images for publication.

The next month was a dream process of researching Cambridgeshire artists – there are so many amazing contemporary artists in the region. Each were approached to ask if they would be interested in submitting images for consideration for the book.

The response was overwhelming, with more than 40 incredible artists and illustrators signing up. The result will be an affordable book showing a unique and diverse collection of contemporary images of Cambridge and the surrounding areas.

This month our illustrious panel will go through the many amazing images we have and choose around 100 for inclusion. It's going to be a hard job. . .

Although there are encouraging noises from publishers, there is also a fantastic opportunity for one or more local companies to sponsor the publication; as well as brand promotion, they would also receive multiple copies of the book to distribute to clients. If you would be interested in hearing more please contact Emma by emailing theheartofcambridge@gmail.com. For more information about the project, see theheartofcambridge.co.uk.