

Where the art is

PAINT JOB: Andrew Hood

Cambridge Art Fair brings an impressive array of international art, artists and galleries to the Guildhall next month. In advance of the not-to-be-missed event, Lisa Millard showcases the artist Andrew Hood who will be showing his latest works of art and representing a hand-picked selection of contemporary artists at Cambridge Art Fair.

CAMBRIDGE Art Fair returns to the Guildhall this year from Friday 30 September to Sunday October 2, bringing more than 35 art galleries and dealers from near and far to the heart of our city. The Fair is an opportunity to see a wide range of international artworks – without having to travel – and to meet the dealers and gallery owners who can provide an insightful introduction to the carefully curated art on show and for sale. Visitors can view and buy highly collectible originals by modern masters – past names include Picasso and Chagall – as well as work by today's leading names, such as Banksy, Hockney and Hirst, and

up-and-coming talents from across the globe. There will be thousands of pieces of original and high quality art to buy, including pieces from the Affordable Art Fair that showcases original art priced between £100 and £5,000. Many of the exhibitors at the event offer leasing packages for businesses and participate in the Arts Council 'Own Art' scheme that enables buyers to pay for art by instalments, making owning art more affordable.

Since its launch in 2013, Cambridge Art Fair has established itself on the international art fair circuit and the range of modern and fine art selected to show is

impressive. There are many art lovers from Cambridge and beyond who are now regulars of the Fair but, if you have an eye for art, or simply enjoy the delight of discovering a new artist, painting, sculpture or prints, this event is not to be missed.

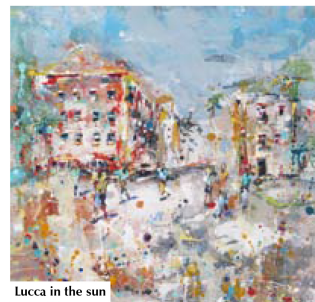
For full details, including this year's exhibitor list, see cambridgeartfair.com. Entry tickets cost £4 and can be booked in advance at cambridgelivetrust.co.uk or bought on the door. Cambridge Art Fair is open from 10.30am to 5.30pm on Friday and Saturday and 10.30am to 5pm on Sunday. Cambridge Magazine is media partner to Cambridge Art fair.



The Thames



Westminster over the Thames



Lucca in the sun

Meet the Cambridge Art Fair artist: Andrew Hood is a Bristol-based artist and digital gallerist.



Can you tell us a little bit about yourself? Did creativity run in the family?

I've always had an avid interest in the arts and used to draw a lot as a boy but it wasn't really until I was in my late 20s that I really took it seriously and returned to University to study illustration. At the end of my degree show a gallery owner spotted my work and offered me an exhibition which, to my surprise, went very well, so it shifted my goal posts a little from illustration to fine art and painting. It took me a few years to establish myself and it was a struggle at first, but eventually I started to get a lot of interest in my work and found myself making a living as a full-time artist. My family is definitely not creative, my Dad played rugby and my Mum golf, so I guess I was the odd one out.

Were you good at art when you were at school?

I was a bit of a rebel and left school with only one qualification – an O-Level in art – and I think I just scraped that! I just wasn't ready to learn at that stage of my life though luckily I could draw which got me into Art College.

What is your earliest memory of seeing a work of art?

My earliest memories of seeing art was my parents' fairly awful framed prints that were very typical of that era – a Spanish lady in a red dress or a Mexican woman dancing round a fire. Even though they were not great pieces of art, I found them very intriguing and realised that behind every painting there is a story. I think that started a love of not just art but art history. I've always had a fascination with analysing paintings.

Have you always made a living as an artist? You also run First Contemporary – can you tell us a little about that?

Before I was an artist I had several jobs, both good and bad. I worked as designer for several years and I also picked potatoes on a farm. I think it's good to have a varied employment history! Now I also run my own digital gallery, called First Contemporary, which takes part in several art fairs every year which, alongside being an artist, is quite demanding. I do find it very rewarding though and enjoy working alongside other artists.

Will you be attending Cambridge Art Fair in person? What paintings will people be able to see if they attend?

I will be taking First Contemporary to the Cambridge Art Fair and exhibiting several new pieces of work next to new paintings

by three of the artists I represent, including Elaine Jones, Catherine Monmanson and Anna Boss.

Recently I have been working mainly on pieces based on the figure; this involves making many studies then creating compositions by putting the figures in a city environment. I like to add elements of abstraction into my work as this is often the thing that makes the paintings exciting. I've also produced several views of London from the London Eye and The Shard. Getting high above the city gives me a great viewpoint but travelling around on The Eye only lasts for 25 minutes, so I have to work pretty fast to get some information down in my sketch book.

This is not the first time you have participated in Cambridge Art Fair. What makes it interesting and have you ever painted Cambridge before?

I exhibited at the Cambridge Art Fair a couple of years ago and I'm very excited to be coming back. It's a great location and it's good to be showing amongst such a high calibre of work. I made a few sketches of Cambridge last time I was there – it's such a beautiful place with amazing architecture.

You describe yourself as a mixed media artist – what is this and why do you work in this style?

I really work mainly in oil these days but sometimes the paintings start with acrylic and during the process I may even use household paint and bitumen. I find different materials add a different dimension to the work and I can achieve colours using something like a garage door paint that I can't get with normal oils. Strange materials often give strange results and I like to be surprised by the paints I use.

Do you start a piece with a 'set' idea?

I start most pieces with a drawing or several drawings in the sketch book and then



OIL AND INK: Red bus on London Bridge

take that as a basis for my composition. I try and let the paint do its own thing, controlling it slightly when it becomes too random. I definitely have a set idea before I start but I try and go with the flow when something exciting starts to happen. Often the best bits in my work were not planned at all. I think I would get bored if I knew what was going to happen all the time.

What is the process you follow that finishes in a painting? Do you always paint large paintings?

I mainly paint large as I find it more expressive but I do make smaller works, though sometimes these act as studies for bigger pieces. It's often very difficult to know when a painting is finished so if I leave them for a couple of months then come back to them atresh I can make a more rational judgement on what needs to be done next. It's very easy to become precious about work but really it's better to have the courage to make radical changes, even if it means painting over something that I've been labouring over for a few weeks.

How did you arrive at your style of art?

My style of art has just evolved over the years without much conscious decision making. I find I sketch in a very messy and

energetic way so I try and emulate this when I paint. I really like there to be an element of chance in my work and I like to treat each painting as though it's my first. Often when I'm faced with a blank canvas I think 'how on earth do I start this', but once I get going I get into the zone a bit.

What sorts of paints and tools and methods do you favour and why?

I like using all sorts of paints. I was particularly fond of enamels as they produce the most amazing colours but unfortunately they've been banned now and you can only get water-based ones, which don't have the same quality. As for tools, I'll use just about anything from bits of card to old brushes. I like to create a lot of texture in my work so often I just grab what's close to hand.

You travel far and wide to find subjects for your paintings. Where does your inspiration come from?

My inspiration comes mainly from my drawings. I like to sketch on location and become very familiar with a place then take this information back into the studio to start painting. When I'm painting, I try and remember the smells and atmosphere of a place and try and describe this through colour and texture. I don't really like to be too literal when painting – I leave that to photographers.

You like to observe and work from above your subject. Can you explain this?

The idea for painting subjects from high up came while I was in India. I was staying in a hotel in New Delhi which had access to the roof and it gave me a great view of the streets below; it was an amazing place to see the mayhem beneath me. I made several sketches here though I didn't actually turn them into paintings until many years later.

What is the price range for your artwork?

My paintings range from around £1,000 to £3,000, although I've recently started selling my drawings which are £250.

Do you think there is a difference between art that critics like and art that the public wants to buy? Do you fall into one or both categories?

I used to think there was a big difference but recently what's popular with the public seems also to be approved by the critics. In the UK our artists are very well known and everybody wants to see an exhibition by Damien Hirst or David Hockney. Many critics do want to see something different or unusual, which I fully understand, but I also think it's great that the public have such a healthy appetite for art and not everyone can afford a Lucien Freud. That's why art fairs like Cambridge Art Fair are so important because they give the public the chance to own their own work of art.



SKETCH: Figure studies with pen

Do you have a favourite artist?

It's a very difficult question to answer as there are many artists I admire, from David Hockney to the American painter Richard Diebenkorn. The best show I've seen recently though was a small exhibition of paintings by Jean Baptiste Corot in the Musee D'Orsay in Paris. He painted mainly outside in France, just before the Impressionists, and paved the way for their style of painting. His technique and feeling were awe-inspiring and very moving.

Do you have regular collectors of your art?

I do have collectors whom I have got to know over the years. It's very nice when people come back to buy another piece of art. I do like to keep in touch with all my clients and let them know when I'm exhibiting. Even if they don't come back to buy it's nice to talk to them. One or two customers have been following my work since my student days.

What are your plans after the Cambridge Art Fair?

I have a few less shows for the next six months so this gives me an opportunity to experiment and work on larger-scale paintings. Some of my pieces are becoming more abstract so I'm going to push that. It's very important to keep everything fresh and make sure I have plenty of new ideas. I'm not always sure what's going to happen next but that's what I like about being an artist, its unpredictability.



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See more at andrewhoodgallery.com and firstcontemporary.com. Watch a short film about Andrew and his work called The London Eye Collection at andrewhoodgallery.com