



# The Sketch

The newsletter of the Cambridge Drawing Society September 2024

## From the President

**Susan Abbs**



As we bid farewell to summer, I'm thrilled to welcome a vibrant autumn season packed with exciting events and creative opportunities for you.

September brings us the Bridge the Gap charity walk <https://bit.ly/sketch-bridgethegap> - the chance to wander through six of Cambridge's colleges while supporting Arthur Rank Hospice Charity and Romsey Mill. I am delighted to organise a special SketchTogether during this event for our Members and Friends to sketch this amazing event.

Another super event to look forward to is the talk by art gallery manager Zuza Grubecka who will share invaluable insights on how to approach galleries with your work.

And if you've ever been curious about the art of marbling paper, you're in for a treat. Sonia Villiers kicks off our autumn series of workshops with a hands-on workshop where you'll learn how to create beautiful marbled paper and use it in your own collages.



Sonia Villiers

To make it easier for you to keep track of all these wonderful events, we've launched a new Events page on our website. Thanks to Tim Duckworth's hard work, you can now find all the information you need in one place.

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Whether you're planning your next creative outing or looking for inspiration, our Events page will be your go-to resource. Check out the [Events page here](#).

And don't forget, autumn also brings us our next exhibition at The Leys School in October.

As we step into this new season, let's embrace the opportunities it brings. Autumn is a time of transformation, not just in nature but in ourselves as well. It's a season to nurture our creativity and to connect with others.

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## Life at Fitzbillies - an artist's adventure in cake

*Naomi Tomkys*



*Coke with Two Straws*

Having black coffee and macarons while sketching at Fitzbillies is how this collection was born. Wondering about the people at other tables, their laughter, coy glances and ice-tea with two straws.

Fitzbillies is quintessentially Cambridge and everyone you meet will have their own story. Whether it's afternoon tea meeting future parents-in-law or a 20-year old memory of Chelsea buns with a grandad after school, Fitzbillies has a place in the hearts of everyone who knows it.

So, as a Cambridge obsessed artist, I've been thinking about capturing the essence of Fitzbillies in a series of drawings and paintings for ages. Wondering how fun it might be to immortalise Fitzbillies' food, staff, history, patrons, vibe and even some drawings behind the scenes.

The exhibition came about when I approached the owners of Fitzbillies completely cold simply wanting permission to sketch in the café. Alison, the owner, and the whole Fitzbillies team loved the idea. So, I've spent the last couple of months sketching and painting. I didn't realise how good I would have to get at painting cakes!

It was only after we had our first meeting that the idea grew into an exhibition on site. So, 'Life at Fitzbillies' was born. The exhibition is about capturing the inimitable character of Fitzbillies, its patrons, its staff and its bakers. In short, these paintings are here to celebrate life at Fitzbillies.

The timeline ended up being exceptionally tight. I tried hard to get it all done around other commitments including an artist in residence, the Open Studios and quite a few commissions that came out of nowhere. I worked and continue to work up to 10 hours a day, seven days a week. (I'm still looking forward to a bit of a break.)



*Sketchbook*





*Chelsea Buns, Sticky Fingers*

I realised quite quickly that I couldn't sketch actual café goers so I started to devise scenarios of why people go to Fitzbillies. I worked up back stories then brought in models, friends, children and complete strangers to pose. For example, I brought in my son and his girlfriend to model as a couple I had seen in Fitzbillies the week before sharing two straws in a coke.

I decided to write about the models' lives as part of the project. I felt that it expanded the breadth and depth of the characters I chose to celebrate. Like Azume, half Nigerian half English, who grew up in Cambridgeshire. After working in the corporate world for 5 years she left to become a curator. She has been traveling through Indonesia since Spring and will shortly be relocating to Japan for her next great adventure. Her story is part of the information label attached to her painting. These stories have become part of the exhibition as a whole.

Fitzbillies' owners have been amazing and produced lots of merchandise as part of the show. Not only greetings cards but a 1000-piece puzzle too. They're working on a 2025 Calendar as well. I'm properly chuffed.

The exhibition opened in July with an extraordinary opening night of Champagne and miniaturized Fitzbillies food, quite wonderful. Interestingly, because I had put the exhibition's development up on social media, and invited my previous buyers, most of the work was already sold by the opening night. Since then, I've been painting even more work to replace the paintings that had to be delivered to new owners. Excitingly, lots of international sales including Paris, Washington and Kuwait.

**The exhibition continues until 6th October at Fitzbillies, 15 King's Parade, Cambridge CB2 1SP.**



*Cake Counter*

## SketchTogether

*Jackie Duckworth*

Our sketching group continues to grow. It's a very friendly group, and Susan and Maureen continue to find beautiful and interesting places to draw.

Open to Members and Friends, watch out for email updates or contact the secretary if you wish to join the CDS WhatsApp group. The programme is listed on our new [Events page](#), so check that out too.

These sketches were made on a trip to St Mary's Lane, followed by a snack and a cuppa at the Fitzwilliam Museum Cafe. A lovely morning was had by all!



*Sketches by: Cathy Parker (top), Nina Burgess, Maureen Mace, Tim Milner (middle row), Isabelle Tombs, Susan Abbs, Jackie Duckworth (bottom row)*

## Autumn Exhibition 2024

*Steve Ashman*



Planning for the Society's Autumn exhibition is well underway, with member submissions starting to flow in. It's always exciting to get a first view of the new works that are going to be in the exhibition.

The exhibition will again be held in the Old Gym at the Leys School in Cambridge. The public exhibition will run from Sunday 27th October through to Saturday 2nd November, where over 250 new works will be exhibited.

The Society currently has 76 Friends and there will be a Friends only preview 11am - Midday on Saturday 26th October. Friends are welcome to bring a guest to the preview. The Society's exhibitions are getting more and more popular, so please take advantage of the Friends preview to be the first to see the exhibition, enjoy some refreshments, and perhaps purchase a lovely piece of work in a relaxed atmosphere. An invitational Private View will follow from Midday to 3pm.



CAMBRIDGE  
DRAWING SOCIETY

# ART EXHIBITION

Sunday 27th October - Saturday 2nd November 2024

**The Leys School**  
**Fen Causeway**  
**Cambridge**  
**CB2 7AD**

Open every day  
10am - 4pm

ADMISSION FREE  
Free parking

Paintings  
Drawings  
Mixed Media  
Prints  
Sculptures



<https://www.cambridgedrawingsociety.org/>



Liber Arbor by Maureen Mace

*Featured artwork: Liber Arbor by  
Maureen Mace*



# Space - a View of the Fens

*Rob Dempsey*

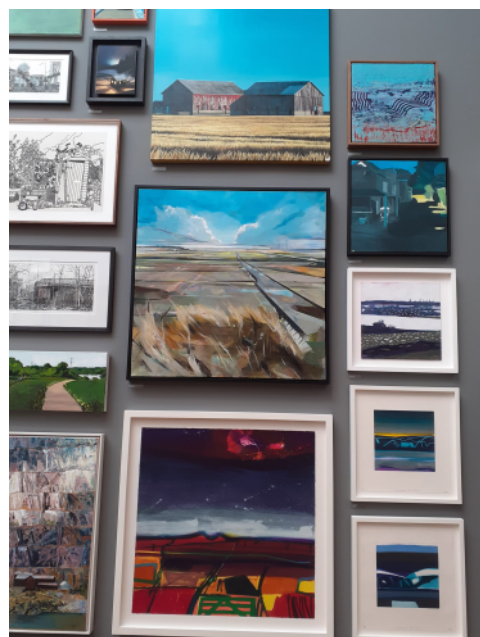
I have been to the Royal Academy Summer exhibition several times but never before entered and so was really pleased when one of the two paintings I entered was accepted. The theme for the exhibition was "Space" and thankfully this fits with my current focus on the Cambridgeshire landscape and its wide open and expansive views.

I have driven through this landscape for many years and when commuting back and forth to a very hectic job I have sometimes wished to instead be able to pull over and just sit in the peace and quiet of the fields and soak in the stillness and spaciousness of it all.

This particular painting is based on a view out across the fields from the Route 11 cycle path in Wicken. The fields fall away from the path and an unobstructed view of many miles stretches out, with the faint suggestion of churches, farm houses and villages in the distance. I am drawn towards this spacious openness and also the geometric, abstract qualities visible in how the land is arranged. Painting these views allows me to dwell in that sense of open, clear space as well and work with the visual elements to more clearly evoke it.



*Shifting Margins*



When deciding on a title, "Shifting Margins", I had in mind several themes related to the way in which the land is continually changing and has changed and may change in future. The types of changes might be subtle and hard to notice or dramatic/cataclysmic. "Margins" refers to physical edges, borders as well as profit margins and margins of error. There is also the shifting boundary between subject and object, viewer and viewed. The viewer brings their own values and instincts to their perception of the image and creates their own unique experience of it, which may well evolve over time.

To find out more about Rob Dempsey's experiences at the Royal Academy, come to his CDS Talk:

Wednesday 23rd October, 7.30pm  
St John's Church, Cambridge

# Shared Air

Donna McCluskie

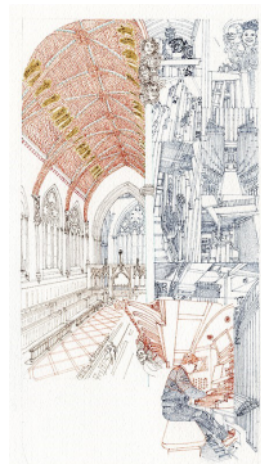
This year, I seem to spend a lot of time cycling around with an A2 waterproof (well, water-resistant) portfolio full of a framed drawing on my back.



I drew Shared Air on commission for LifeArc and Cambridge Rare Disease Network. It went on exhibit at London Business Design Centre this past spring and will be shown again at RAREfest in Cambridge this November.

This commission was a collaboration between science and art but, to be honest, my own personal agenda was all about further exploring my current favourite medium of pen and watercolour ink and to somehow show sound. CamRARE wanted me to include the faces of six young people with rare disease and this made perfect sense since St. John's College Chapel had recently fundraised in support of their activities group.

Then my scientist collaborator suggested that I could also draw in a scientist – perhaps she herself could be present? And, why not also her team of scientists?

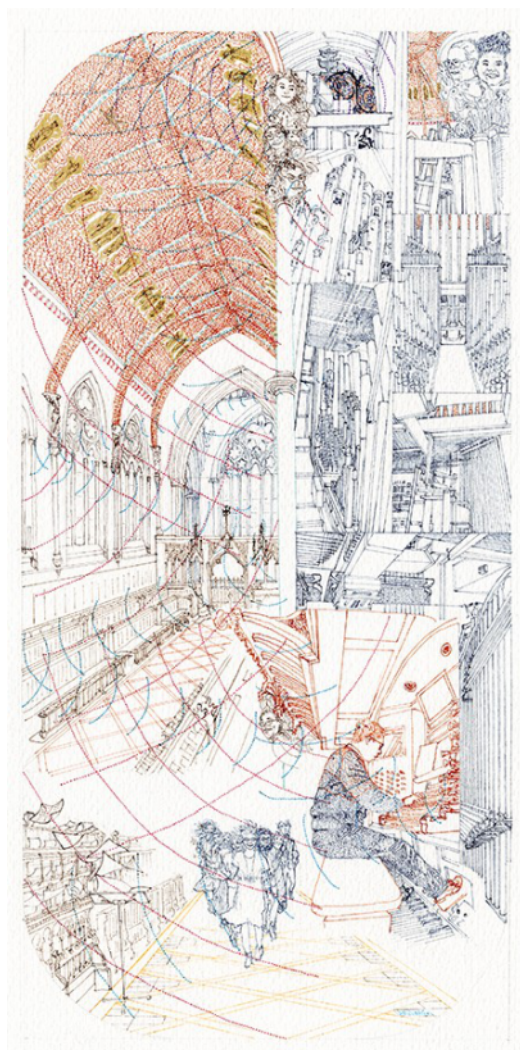


Brochure Version

The brochure deadline was looming large but I promised she would be in the final version of Shared Air. Meanwhile, the new Director of Music wasn't keen to be drawn in, neither did he want his choir to be shown. At St. John's Chapel, uniquely, they leave out sheet music for the next performance instead of each chorister carrying in a music folder. My sound consultant mentioned how early sound studies showed some distortion of candle flame due to sound.

I decided to take that idea further and not only have the scientists' candles but also their hair and skirts caught up in a whirlwind of sound. Without the Director or choir to hold them down, sheets of music also took flight in my drawing.

When I finished the brochure version, everyone told me not to draw more for fear of ruining the spatial clarity. However, the reason I left out shade and shadow was to fully celebrate the hall's volume and make space to show sound at this scale. I'm glad that I believed in my own intention, but it was daunting. For more about this, here's my blog: <https://hiddencreaturesart.com/2024/04/21/shared-air/>



Shared Air

It's always an adventure to stretch the edges of what's possible. Whereas there are eight ink colours in Shared Air, my next commission has 28!



# Autumn Events Updates

*Tracey Ashman*

There have been several exciting updates to our events list for the Autumn. As well as the talks by Zuza Grubecka, Rob Dempsey and Debbie Baxter mentioned elsewhere, we have:

Workshop: 'Mixed Media Landscape' with [Alice Thomson](#) Saturday 30th November

Talk: 'An Artists View of Anthony Trollope' given by Alan Barrell on behalf of his wife Pamela , Wednesday 26th February 2025, 7.30-9.30pm.

Demonstration: Landscapes by [Carole Massey](#)  
Wednesday 26th March 2025, 7.30-9.30pm

For full details of our talks and workshops, visit our new [Events page](#).



## The Power and Grace of Water

*Debbie Baxter*



There is nothing more beautiful than watching snow melt waters flow from one lake to another in Finland's northern wilderness. To sit and paint rapids and listen to the thundering flow while trying to capture the nuances, shapes, patterns and light perched on a rocky precipice receiving the fine ionised spray. The noise itself leaves no room for meandering thoughts and the rush of adrenaline has me painting with huge intensity. I am here to learn, observe, feel and paint the many thousands of waterways on this huge land mass that is more wilderness than humanly inhabited.

I've travelled for 8 weeks zigzagging up from Turku, Finland's southern city to its most Northern areas. Past the Arctic Circle line living in a small Campervan that holds all my belongings and painting equipment. It's a once in a lifetime trip and I am seeking out waterways, rapids, lakes and falls.

I've worked hard to get here. I've tried every avenue for funding, arts councils, art trusts, organisations that might be interested in this journey. I even applied to the British Mycological Society. I've written to every art establishment in Finland. Have spoken in detail to the John Muir trust but the only thing that truly worked was a gofundme page! I am here only on the belief and support of individuals and small organisations that understood my vision for this trip.

I will not see darkness for 58 days. I will see the raw beauty of tundra, reindeer, ancient pine and water so clear and pristine I can see rich life at the bottom.



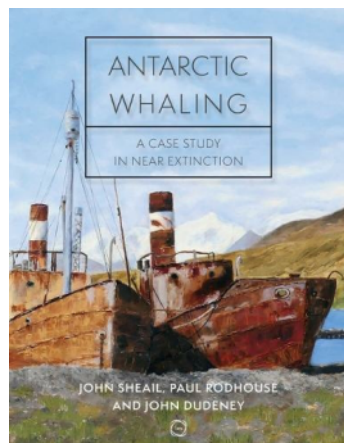
*Salla Falls*



On the 27th November 2024 at St Johns Church, Cambridge Debbie Baxter will give a talk about this extraordinary painterly trip to Finland and showcase her 'plein air' and studio paintings in an exhibition from the adventure.

## Antarctic Whaling

**Paul Rodhouse**



A new book: Antarctic whaling: a case study in near extinction by authors John Sheail, Paul Rodhouse and John Dudeney was published in July. The front cover is a detail from a painting by Paul Rodhouse of the hulks of two whaler's vessels, Albatross and Dias ashore at Grytviken, South Georgia.

Antarctic Whaling explores how British whalers came to claim so large a share of the whales taken from the Southern Ocean in the first half of the twentieth century, and, more particularly, where, when, how and why the British Government came to play so large a part in whaling history through its endeavour to regulate the whaling grounds. It explains the scientific findings of the Discovery Investigations and why they did not save the whales.