

Collaborative Cassandra Harrison finds benefit in the art of sharing

Edinburgh-based artist Cassandra Harrison has painted a whole new business landscape using online learning and technology to collaborate with other artists and business owners.

Working with like-minded artists, Nebraska-born Cassandra is focusing on promoting online classes to encourage budding artists of all ages.

She ended up in the UK as a result of meeting a Brit on holiday, and having just finished art school and armed with a teaching degree she made the trans-Atlantic switch, eventually settling in Edinburgh.

With access to wild countryside, mountains and the sea on her doorstep, Cassandra finds “pretty Edinburgh” is full of all sorts of inspiration that she found lacking in Nebraska.



Claire Doyle has a background in fine arts and art education and her 3Theatre company takes a new approach to theatre education, aiming to build confidence and positive mental health practice through the arts. It seemed like the ideal collaboration and using Zoom, Claire served up a session of dancing, singing and acting, while Cassandra taught about art to the children taking part. “It was like a big party, and we even sent recipes for cookies to bake and eat during the two hour call,” she said.

Cassandra was also aware of the work of The Edinburgh Sketcher, Mark Kirkham, through the business networking group Love Your Business, run by Michelle Brown. “I was working with Michelle through Business Gateway and during an advisor session she helped me to identify potential collaborations.

“To be honest I am a little tired of working by myself and it is a bit isolating to always have to come up with ideas. Then there was lockdown and I am home schooling my seven-year-old some of the time.

“I realised that I draw a lot of Edinburgh and when the weather is nice you can get out with a sketchpad and draw. I had been following Mark on social media for some time and so I asked if he would like to get together.

“We had a number of Zoom sessions several Thursdays in a row, which were so well attended. It was just such an easy relationship to work with Mark in these sessions and working with him has been really enjoyable.

“After a short break we did some more online classes using charcoal, paints and different pens and pencils, and we then invited guests to join us. One guest was comedian Jo Caulfield and she was such fun – I was so starstruck. Jo suggested three buildings we could talk about and Mark led us through drawing them while Jo talked about her love of each of the buildings.”



Classes are targeted at adults but often families also join in, with each session planned so that one is teaching while the other collaborator is supervising the Zoom chat function. Cassandra added: “From September to December we hosted all

sorts of guests and the classes focussed on all sorts of things, from rooftops, plaques on special buildings and different aspects of the properties. We have taken a break for the moment but classes will soon resume.”

As for Cassandra’s own art, she has received and completed a number of commissions of places in and around Edinburgh: “Recently, I was commissioned to draw Abbey Strand, down by the Palace of Holyroodhouse, and I was also commissioned to create a digital artwork from the top of Brunstfield looking to Edinburgh Castle, with Barclay Church in the panoramic view.”

www.cassandraharrison.co.uk

www.3theatre.com

www.edinburghsketcher.com