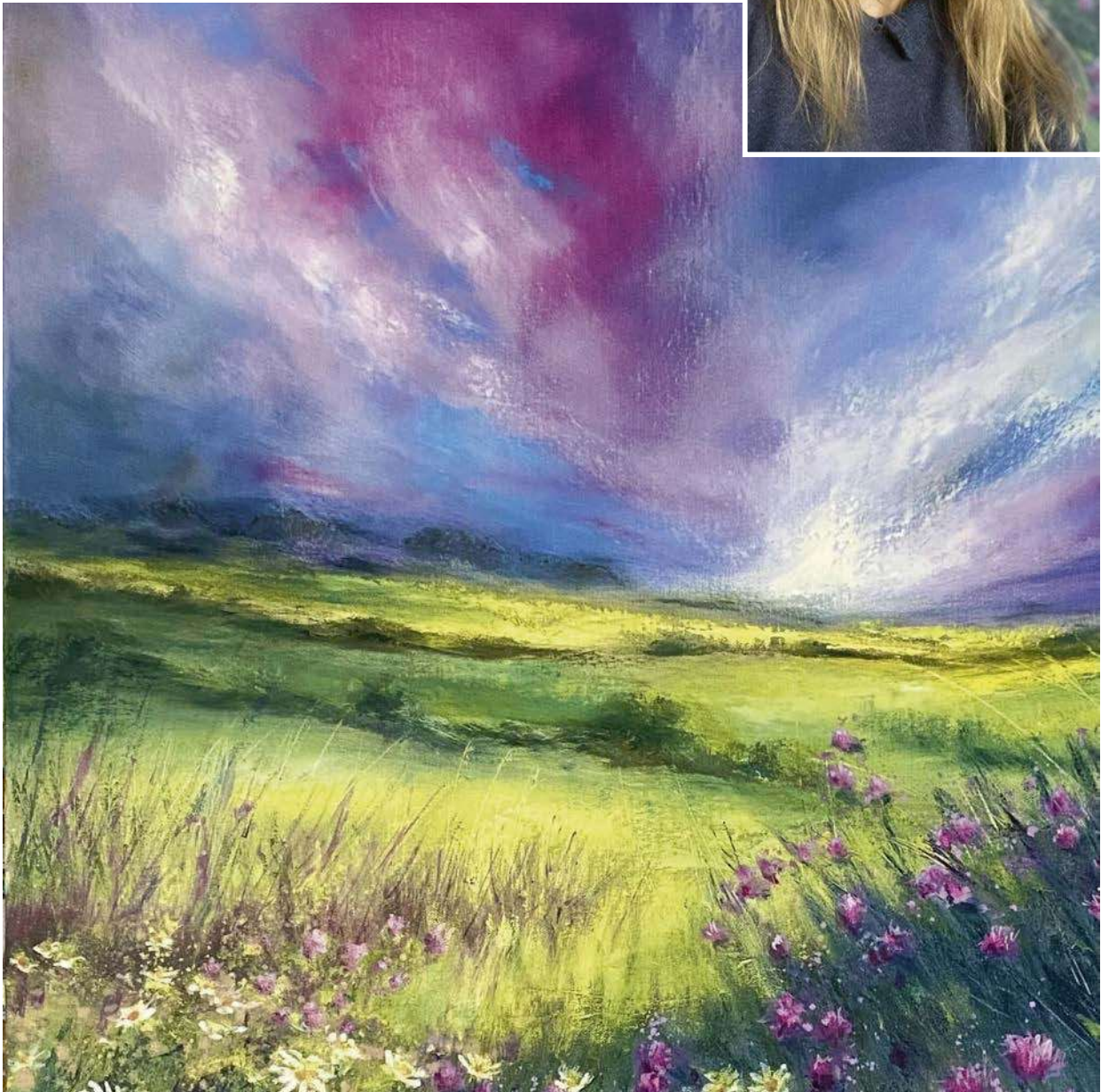


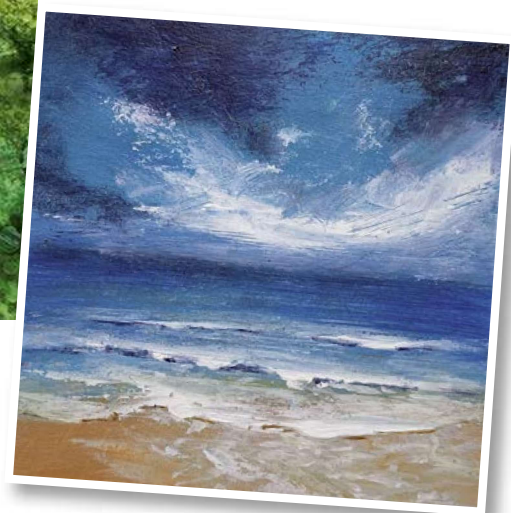


## MEET THE ARTIST: Cathryn Jeff

Cathryn Jeff is a popular Oxfordshire landscape artist, known for her vibrant paintings that enhance the colours and views of the county with texture, energy, and sparkling imagination. She grew up in Long Hanborough and has lived in West Oxfordshire, which she loves, for most of her life. “I did spend some time in the North East, and, yes, it was beautiful, but I still found myself drawn back here”.







She continues: “I love being outside no matter what the conditions. I totally believe that phrase ‘There’s no such thing as bad weather, only unsuitable clothing’. You can wrap up against the rain; if it’s windy, it’s exhilarating and so on. I go out every day with my energetic Labrador, Lenny – I got him to give me an excuse to walk so much.

I’m at my happiest when the sky is doing something unexpected: you can see amazing colours at sunrise and sunset, peaches, pinks and purples that reflects on the fields giving them an extraordinary glow and turn them colours that are surprisingly bright sometimes. Or there’ll be a moment in the day when the light has a different quality – perhaps it will be soft and low on a winter’s morning and there are long shadows stretching across the ground, or it flickers golden through the silhouettes of trees.

I’m particularly drawn to trees. Who could fail to be amazed by Blenheim’s incredible old oaks? They’re only three miles from where I live and they’re over four hundred years old. Their gnarly branches draw intricate patterns against the sky and so they’re great to paint. If I’m honest, however, my favourite tree is the silver birch, and those that I find in little copses and undiscovered woods that I find on paths that are off the beaten track with pretty flowers and wild garlic. When I am walking through them, I rarely see another soul. They’re so peaceful, almost mystical, that they could be the setting of a fairytale, and that’s a feeling I try to capture in my paintings.

In the spring the woods are magical when the bluebells are out en masse – that’s the best time of year – and the colour they add to the landscape is stunning. I can’t help but paint them. When I am out and about I take photos to remind me of the colours. Then, although I work from memory mostly and play with composition of a scene when I am back in the studio, they’re great reminders. ▶





I also have a trail I enjoy in North Leigh that takes me through bracken and ferns: in the spring and summer, they grow higher than my head and I feel as if I am in an Indiana Jones film and need a trusty scythe to get back to civilization. I often put these in the foreground of my work, or even paint on a fern I have brought home and use it to print with. I also love splattering fluid paint to suggest foliage, small flowers and foreground interest. And for the first layer of my backgrounds, I often use a fluid paint effect, I'm introducing an element of the unknown right at the beginning, so the paintings are a bit of an adventure, too."

New for this year, Cathryn has been developing her art into 3D wall art in a crisp white box frames. Rather than being painted on a flat board as a single scene, these landscapes are built from several layers of clear plastic each of which is painted separately with acrylic, ink and oil paint so that the viewer can see right into the picture, which moves as they do.

"I just love the process of experimenting and creating art in different ways, and I often try out new materials and surfaces to paint on. When I stumbled across some clear rigid plastic panels in my studio left over from a batch of frames, I started painting landscapes on them and had the exciting idea of layering up these painted panels spaced with gaps to create 3D scenes. As the panels are clear, you can see right through to the painting at the back. For example, the panel at the front might have foreground interest such as grasses, trees or flowers raised up against the rear panel, a background scene of distant hedgerows, a field or woodland. It's a totally different way of working as I need to consider the layers, not as individual paintings, but as a whole piece, so I often swap rotate or even flip the painted panels to create the most successful composition. Often, I paint on the reverse, complicating

“  
Who could fail to be amazed by Blenheim’s incredible old oaks?”







Maria O'Meara

## The English Garden

The best of British, this month's topic, and how many wonderful themes to choose from and expand upon. Allow me though this time to focus my attention on the beautiful gardens of England that captivate the culture itself, facilitate the sanity of the nation, and bring people together.

Britain has a wealth of garden attractions, many located in our very own county, such as the Blenheim Palace gardens, Heythorp Park gardens, Rousham gardens as well as the Oxford University Botanic Garden right at the heart of our iconic city.

One does not have to go far to realise how proud we are of our gardens.

Especially, this time of the year a traditional English garden would be the host of contrasting colour palettes that come together between stretches of lush lawns, beautifully clipped hedges, water features, intriguing bird feeders, as well as humorous and/or extra stylish garden sculptures. Colours of blue, green, purple, red, pink, violets and yellows all intertwine in an intense visual symphony absolute fitting to nature's orchestra with all the tweets and buzzes.

The English garden captivates the nation's flair and temperament and as wonderful as it is for the aesthetic benefits, gardening itself, *"can reduce anxiety and social isolation experienced in young and old alike...The benefits of being in the garden run much deeper than just exercise. A King's Fund report on the health benefits of gardening were found to be broad and diverse, with research studies showing significant reductions in depression and anxiety and improved social functioning. Gardening can also help maintain independence and prevent cognitive decline. Tokyo and Exeter Universities also found robust evidence for the positive effects of gardening on health, calling for governments and health organisations to promote gardening. (rhs.org.uk)*

It is no coincidence that in the famous novel by Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland, the garden is thought to symbolise Alice's desire, will and her belief in goodness and happiness.

And, as Audrey Hepburn once said: "To plant a garden is to believe in tomorrow"

the process even more, but I love the challenge.

I discovered that the clear panels gives me the chance to add other elements such as flying birds or tree branches that look they are suspended within the painting, and if direct light shines on to the artwork, it doubles the amount of birds or branches by casting shadows so the details change throughout the day, and with the weather."

Cathryn has been exhibiting her work with Oxfordshire Artweeks since 2011. This year, in

St Mary's Church in Charlbury you can see a selection of her 2D and 3D paintings including seascapes inspired by visits to the coast in Cornwall, Devon and Wales. (Artweeks venue 70)

She will also have a small collection of mini-paintings including woodlands and Oxford scenes available to view at Payne & Son (Oxford Jeweller & Silversmith) on Oxford High Street during the Artweeks festival (Artweeks venue 249).

For more details on these venues and to see hundreds more as part of the Oxfordshire Artweeks festival, visit [artweeks.org](http://artweeks.org)