

# five minutes with

# Rhonda Campbell

Canterbury artist Rhonda Campbell's colourful art and her uplifting style and choice of subject matter are well known and admired by many. It can also be found in a diverse range of settings including the Clinton's (yes, Bill and Hillary own several) and now the brand new Outpatients Department at Christchurch Hospital. Rhonda had her studio and gallery in the Arts Centre for 22 years; since events forced a relocation she has been working from her studio at home. I caught up with Rhonda to find out a little more about this intriguing, energetic artist...

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**feel about having your art in such a prominent city building?**

It's good. The hospital actually has over 100 of my pieces including three large ones in Orthopaedics (one is eight feet long) plus several other departments and waiting rooms. People say it makes them happy. I've had families say that the art has cheered them up so it works well for me and the viewer.

**Who are your all time favourite artists?**

I love Chagall, Matisse, and Picasso is my favourite possibly... he has influenced me a lot especially in cubism because his work is clear and concise. I also like some NZ deceased artists such as Jane Evans, Pat Hanley and Peter

McIntyre.

**What other areas of creativity do you explore?**

I'm a jazz singer – I used to be a full time professional singer, guitarist and keyboard player. I still sing with bands regularly. I also enjoy Ceroc dancing for a hobby.

**What do you love about being an artist?**

The freedom.

**What is challenging, in your chosen career?**

At present, post quake, the lack of visual art in the city. The venues and opportunities are slim; I wish there were more venues.

**What would you like to see in the new Christchurch?**

From my point of view I think it is very important to have a new Arts Centre as

quickly as possible – not in five years time! People are crying out for art and there were 600 people working from the Arts Centre – if we don't do something quickly we will lose them. I am thinking of leaving for Melbourne myself.

**On a personal note, what is your favourite item of clothing?**

My dance shoes.

**What were you doing the last time the thought went through your mind, "I shouldn't be doing this"?**

When I was sitting looking at the destroyed Arts Centre and then walking down Worcester Boulevard looking at The Strip straight after the earthquake.

**Who are your current favourite musicians?**

I still love Nat King Cole and the old jazz musicians. And Eva Cassidy.

**What do you love to do on a Sunday afternoon?**

Go dancing or a walk in the park.

**What is your favourite drink?**

Tea.

**What is your favourite café, restaurant or bar in Christchurch?**

Becks Southern Ale House in Sydenham – I sing there once a month.

**What are you like at parties?**

Either outrageous or very quite – I am one of extremes!

**What's next on the wish list?**

I want to get back to work. I'm looking for the most beautiful spot in the world to sit and paint as I'm looking at it. If anyone knows of such a place please contact me. My website: [www.rhondacampbell.com](http://www.rhondacampbell.com)

**When did you begin painting?**

At about age three. I painted every day from an early age. I remember thinking, when I was about seven, that I'd be a famous artist when I was really old.

**Your art is very colourful, lively and full of emotion, when did you first realise you enjoyed expressing yourself through art?**

It has happened naturally. My whole family are very creative through the stage, singing and dancing. I was always encouraged to express myself – it's what I do best.

**You have painted many Christchurch street and café scenes, with the city not at its best lately, where are you now finding inspiration?**

I'm not at the moment. It's very difficult when what had inspired you is gone. So I am now investigating a new style – cubism. I have three new pieces done, you can see them on my blog on my website or on facebook.

**What is your favourite media? And why?**

I do like oils, but I quite often change back to watercolours and acrylics. Most of all I love mixed media collage – it's very creative. I paint in quite a different way to others – I work from back to front – I put everything in and then take a lot out, so in the end you are left with the essence.

**How would you describe your style?**

It ranges from realism to abstract expressionism and impressionism.



**The Clinton family has some of your art – how did you get to meet them?**

I have met them around four times in Christchurch, at my studio in The Arts Centre – they have many pieces of my art now and Bill has sent me four letters, the last one handwritten, inviting me to meet him sometime in New York.

**The new Outpatients Department at Christchurch Hospital has installed six of your giclees prints on canvas because of your "joyous colours and positive subject matter". How do you**

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