



## **Calder Navigation – Christine Martin**

### **[00:00:03] - Samantha**

Welcome to Calder Navigation, the podcast that embarks on a transformative journey through the lives and stories of the incredible people of Calderdale.

### **[00:00:12] - Samantha**

I'm your host, Samantha McCormick, artistic director and founder of Curious Motion, and I'm thrilled to have you join me on this adventure. Calder Navigation invites you to open your hearts and minds to the tapestry of everyday moments and significant events that shape our lives.

### **[00:00:29] - Samantha**

Through authentic and relaxed conversations, we'll delve into the complexities of what it means to be human, celebrating the diversity and resilience of our community. This podcast is not just a collection of stories. Each episode is a unique exploration, a tribute to the rich tapestry of our shared experiences.

### **[00:00:49] - Samantha**

So come and join us on this journey and let's celebrate the remarkable individuals who call the Calder Valley home. And let's uncover the depth and beauty of the human experience together.

### **[00:01:00] - Samantha**

This time we're joined by Christine Martin, the brilliant artist behind Kissy Colour Art and Crafts. For years, her paintbrushes patiently collected cobwebs and dust until the undeniable need for creative expression could no longer be contained. Christine's artistic journey has been a testament to the power of capturing moments of joy that words often struggle to convey.

### **[00:01:24] - Samantha**

With a unique blend of illustrative and figurative art, she has mastered the art of encapsulating those fleeting instances that remain indescribable to others. While Christine doesn't confine herself to a singular style, her passion for exploring the kaleidoscope of colours across various mediums shines through. Acrylic on canvas has been a prominent surface for her creativity.

### **[00:01:49] - Samantha**

Notably, Christine's commission pieces have transcended boundaries, finding homes internationally and gracing venues across West Yorkshire. But Christine's influence doesn't stop on canvas. She goes above and beyond, extending her creative hand through workshops that radiate inspiration. Through her



workshops, Christine empowers individuals to unlock their inner creativity, fostering wellbeing, collaboration and personal growth. From group endeavors to one on one interactions, she's a guiding light on the path to self expression.

**[00:02:22] - Samantha**

Christine has lived in Elland for over 20 years and is part of the collective Utopia Arts based at Cult Enterprise. So whether you're an art enthusiast, a creative soul, or simply someone captivated by the magical interplay of colours, join us as we set sail into the captivating world of Christine's artistry and creativity. Get ready to explore the depths of imagination, emotion and the boundless horizons that art opens before us.

**[00:02:51] - Samantha**

Hi, Christine. Thank you for being here. It's really nice to chat to you. And we're in your lovely conservatory, which feels very bright and uplifting this afternoon, so thank you for having me.

**[00:03:02] - Christine**

You're welcome. Thank you.

**[00:03:04] - Samantha**

So could you start by telling us just a little bit about your background? And I know you've had quite an interesting professional background.

**[00:03:11] - Christine**

Yeah, so my name is Christine. I moved to Elland in 2001 looking for work, because there's not much work in the north-east, and I started off working in a dental practice where I thought, oh, I need to expand my medical side. So I enrolled into Huddersfield Nursing College, where I've been a nurse for over 16 years. During this period, I was very, very stifled in my job. Loved passionately, the clients, hated shift work, and my longing to do art was eaten away at me.

**[00:03:55] - Christine**

So, over a period of the last five years of my nursing career, I got into holistic therapies and I had my first attunement of Reiki in 2012, I think it was. And from that point, I realised I needed to start painting again and I had a really-, urge to buy canvases and just put anything onto paper and exploring again. So slowly, I built up my portfolio again doing art, but something was still a little bit missing and I was doing all of this in my home, which is quite difficult. So I moved from the kitchen table into our shed at the bottom of the garden, where I explored different mediums.



**[00:04:54] - Christine**

My main focus was on people. I really enjoy exploring people's emotions through my work, from the colour, representing how people might feel, delving a little bit more into the way they look. And from that, I built up a small collection and then I started to think, hmm, maybe I could get my work out there and people have a look at my work. So I then started asking local shops. There was a craft shop in Elland that I had a few of my pieces in. And then also the holistic side of things, the hub I used to attend, they were asking for artwork to be displayed, so I started putting my work in there. I started to attend holistic therapy, mind, body and soul events, and that's when I got approached by a lady who was writing books to illustrate for her book. So in 2019, or was it 2018, sorry. I helped to illustrate for Bluetooth and the World Wide Web, which was a really big achievement and a big sort of wow for me. But still, there was still something not quite right. I was still doing a lot of work in my little shed, which became too full, so I moved back into my conservatory, which we're sitting in at the moment. So I started to look for studio space. Financially, it was a bit of a no.

**[00:06:54] - Samantha**

Yeah, it's really challenging, isn't it?

**[00:06:56] - Christine**

Yes. I looked at many places and it was just undoable because I was working full time. By this point, I'd stopped working in nursing and I was working with young children in family centres and it was just-, I needed somewhere to go. So I put an advert on Facebook and that's when Russell at Cult saw my message saying, I'm looking for studio space, is there anywhere? And he says, oh, come down and we'll discuss having a look at a space at Cult. So I went down, had a look in upstairs studios, and it was like, oh, my goodness, because it was still part of the big-, and I really enjoyed Russell's vision for the whole place and it was how we're going to bring people together within Elland and how we can do art sessions. And I'd previously run art workshops at the holistic hub that I was part of, and they were going well. But I knew there was an avenue where there was a missing link, where our children have been through so much with COVID and children being isolated in their rooms, not being able to get out or not wanting to get out anymore.

**[00:08:30] - Samantha**

So we can now hear drums, so we're not sure if this will make it into the recording, but if it does, the drums that you can hear in the background we think are coming from a neighbour. This is real life in Elland, everybody. This is what happens when we're out and about. But we love it, we'll embrace it. Christine, where were we? What were you saying? Let's go back to that.

**[00:08:50] - Christine**



So I was just talking to-, about my art workshops that I've ran in the past and how it's helped some of our older generation who's been retired and not knowing what they want to do and exploring and unlocking their creativity again.

**[00:09:09] - Christine**

But also, I think COVID did have a big impact in my household with regards to my son and been becoming quite reclusive really, not having the contact with his own age group for a while. And he was quite creative at one point. But I feel like COVID stopped his creativity and stopped him from going out and meeting his own friends. He still kept his sports side of things up, but it wasn't the same. And then listening to the children on their school sort of Zooms that they were having during COVID, they weren't getting the same experience with art, so they weren't getting to feel and do the textural stuff that they should be through art. Even children at primary school, they're not getting the same sort of lessons anymore. Everything's become sort of computer generated or they just have to trace or draw things. They're not getting that full emergence-, because it's very sensory.

**[00:10:30] - Samantha**

It is, isn't it?

**[00:10:33] - Christine**

And then talking to more parents, I heard more parents saying that there's nothing for kids to go and be creative and try their own styles. It's always either you have to do it like this or you have to do it like that or nothing at all.

**[00:10:54] - Christine**

So that's when I introduced art journaling, it helped my son. He went through a lot of loss during COVID, a loss of friends, moving outside of areas unexpectedly, changing schools. So all of this trauma that was going on for him, he couldn't express himself. So we ended up going to the studio and just having a sketchbook and doodling. So that was a really big thing and it was his art pad. He could put whatever he wanted in it, he could share it with us if he wanted to or he couldn't, or he might just say, oh, no, I don't want you to read that. I don't want you to look at that, and that's okay.

**[00:11:45] - Christine**

So from there, I thought, well, there's more teenagers like this. There's more kids that need to express themselves and how can I help them unlock that creativity and how will that help them? So that's when I started running art journaling classes for preteens. Again, an age group that we seem to miss.

**[00:12:08] - Samantha**



Yeah, there is-, it seems to be that kind of young children and then children who are full on teenagers and that transitional bit.

**[00:12:17] - Christine**

Yeah, it's a grey area. So slowly there's been parents contacting us and that inquired-, and I just get them to come along. Can try it, if they don't like it, that's okay. But letting them create is really, really important. I just can't believe that some of our schools are not providing this for our children.

**[00:12:44] - Samantha**

It's difficult, isn't it? I think we're in a world at the moment where our systems and ways of living and governmental policies and all this sort of stuff is just stripping away that innate human need to create. And that doesn't mean like any sort of formalised thing or it could be anything at all.

**[00:13:09] - Christine**

Absolutely.

**[00:13:10] - Samantha**

And it's part of-, I mean, there's loads of data around how important creativity is for people's wellbeing, and creativity is, gosh, endless in what it can be.

**[00:13:19] - Christine**

Absolutely, absolutely. And we've gone very computer generated where, like we've just said, it's art, it can be sensory, it can be everything. And I think a lot of children have missed out on that sensory experience as well. So get arty, get messy,

**[00:13:40] - Samantha**

Get in there. And it's about-, I also think it's kind of like without access, how is anybody going to know what they enjoy, the ways they can express themselves? I'm not an artist, a visual artist at all. And if somebody said, draw this thing, I'd be like, oh God, this is going to be awful. Like, don't watch me do it. But if I can doodle or scribble or play with colour or patterns, love all of that. And I've only found that out because I've met people like you. And I didn't get a lot of that at school, but I was dancing a lot. So that's probably why. People have gone, oh, we'll just have a little go at this or have a go at that, and without the pressure and with that really good, nice welcoming focus on it's not about the outcome or the making something perfect or anything. And I wouldn't know that if I hadn't have had that access.

**[00:14:33] - Christine**



And just being able to get lost in the process of this is, if anything, the most healthiest thing for anybody because you're not having to think, it's got to look like this. No pressure. You're creating. You're just going with the flow. You're experimenting in your own way. And if it turns out fantastic, it turns out fantastic. And if it doesn't, well, so what, we'll just move on and have a try of something else.

**[00:15:00] - Samantha**

Definitely, yeah. It's so essential for everyone, isn't it? But I think, like you said, we know that young people are a group that have been disproportionately affected by the lockdowns and data I was reading recently says that young people are five times more likely to feel lonely than an older person, which is an interesting piece of information, I think, and something to really pay attention to. So with your work for young people, have you seen any sort of particular outcomes or?

**[00:15:33] - Christine**

I've seen such creativity. I have never seen such a young bunch that I've been so proud of. They just will have a go at anything. And I've noticed that the group that I've got at the moment, they're slowly-, you can see they feel more comfortable with each other. So there's a rapport building and I think that's really important too. It's got that social skills, which I think, maybe the experience in lockdown has denied a lot of children them social skills.

**[00:16:09] - Samantha**

I think some adults might have lost some social skills as well.

**[00:16:11] - Christine**

Yes, I totally agree with that as well. And again, that's another reason why we've ran some of the free workshops, just to help people who feel isolated be around people that are of their own generation or even a good mixture. It's amazing what can happen and sparking each other's ideas and energy and creativity off. It's lovely.

**[00:16:37] - Samantha**

So true.

**[00:16:38] - Christine**

So nice.

**[00:16:39] - Samantha**



Yeah. There's something really amazing about that social interaction through art as well. And I think it comes naturally to us in a way, but maybe we don't realise that until we're in it. And then we're like, of course this is what this does. But I suppose if we're trying to separate it out or we think about art separately from life or something like that, we forget that there's all these wonderful parts of being human and things that we need and skills that we learn that aren't particularly art related. But we can still practice them and learn them by doing something creative. And it's a real shame that's being kind of denied, isn't it, in a lot contexts.

**[00:17:22] - Christine**

Diluted or denied, yes.

**[00:17:28] - Samantha**

So with your own practice now, is your work, particularly your work with young people and your work at Cult, is it filling that gap? I know you said you've got this thing in you, haven't you?

**[00:17:42] - Christine**

I still have the need to expand more because I know I've got so much more to give in my art and creating for me is very important. So I'd like to develop my own style even more. And I have got an urge to do some more children books. So if anybody wants an illustrator.

**[00:18:03] - Samantha**

Good to know.

**[00:18:05] - Christine**

But also I'd like to do one for myself, even.

**[00:18:08] - Samantha**

I think that's a good point because especially if any of your work and this is arts or non arts is something about caring or supporting or helping other people, you have to find a way to fill your own cup, don't you?

**[00:18:21] - Christine**

Absolutely. So it's good to give, but you've also got to listen to yourself and keep your creativity going for yourself as well. Yeah, that's really important to me, so I make sure I set time aside for me to paint.



**[00:18:37] - Samantha**

Great. Do you schedule that in quite rigidly?

**[00:18:39] - Christine**

I do, yeah. Quite rigid with that. So Wednesdays is normally my let's create. This is my day, nobody's going to disturb me. And then weekends. And it's nice that I've got the accessibility to walk to my studio, if it's nice weather, weather permitting. But also, I don't live that far from it either, so it's, yeah.

**[00:19:05] - Samantha**

Yeah, and nice to be doing your work in your local community, I imagine.

**[00:19:09] - Christine**

Absolutely, definitely. Just being around people who obviously I've moved into this area all those many years ago, but still getting to know people, still getting to know my community and starting to be more of a community, which is really important.

**[00:19:28] - Samantha**

Yeah. I found working in Elland and the sort of surrounding areas, there are so many amazingly interesting and wonderful people and things going on that are kind of maybe sometimes sort of below the surface a little bit. People might not realise these things are happening, and being able to uncover that and get involved in it is really fulfilling, I suppose.

**[00:19:50] - Christine**

Absolutely, definitely. I'm so grateful because when I moved down here, I was really lucky. I had local people who became my child minders, which I wouldn't have been able to go out to work and then do everything else. And they knew the area, so they could help me to explore the area a bit more and take my children to places that I didn't know existed. So, yeah, the community is really alive here, but we need to keep it more alive.

**[00:20:29] - Samantha**

Yes. And show everyone it's alive in a way. Definitely, it's sort of bubbling there, isn't it?

**[00:20:35] - Christine**

It is, of course it is.



**[00:20:35] - Samantha**

Very exciting.

**[00:20:36] - Christine**

Definitely.

**[00:20:38] - Samantha**

So if I'm wondering, there'll be people listening that probably really have a creative passion, that maybe they relate a little bit to your experience of not being able to fully go there or find that real fulfillment from them. And I just wondered what advice you'd offer somebody if they're sort of thinking, do you know what, I've got this, I really, really want to do this thing. And regardless of whether they want to do it professionally or not, because it's all valid, isn't it? Regardless whether it's your professional main job or not. But being able to really just let yourself have a creative practice or experience, whatever it is, is there any particular advice you'd give them?

**[00:21:19] - Christine**

I would say, go out and get yourself a sketchbook. Get a sketchbook and get a pencil. Doodle. Doodle. As soon as it comes into your head, doodle. Because that's your starting block. A little bit of creative freedom, even if it's just five or ten minutes a day, put something down on a piece of paper. It doesn't have to be a piece of art but it could develop into a good piece of art and then if you've got that urge to do more, go and look for some classes. There's classes out there. I would just tell you to pick your pencil up or pick a paintbrush up. Don't be scared of trying, a blank canvas isn't the scariest thing, it's what's going on in your head's the scariest thing.

**[00:22:13] - Samantha**

Oh, gosh, that's so true. I think that's a metaphor for a lot of things.

**[00:22:17] - Christine**

Exactly. Gets it out. The more you get it out, the more you'll learn to create and that's what everybody is part of. We all create.

**[00:22:29] - Samantha**

We all do, you're right.

**[00:22:31] - Christine**



Just in different forms.

**[00:22:33] - Samantha**

Yeah.

**[00:22:33] - Christine**

So definitely just get a cheap sketchbook, pencil or even a pen, get it out.

**[00:22:42] - Samantha**

Yeah, get it out.

**[00:22:44] - Christine**

Definitely.

**[00:22:47] - Samantha**

There is something about, if there's a lot going on in your head, particularly which I think for many of us there is or always is.

**[00:22:54] - Christine**

Absolutely.

**[00:22:55] - Samantha**

Physically getting it on paper-,

**[00:22:57] - Christine**

Releases so much.

**[00:22:58] - Samantha**

It really does, doesn't it? Even if it's writing or scribbling or there's sort of practices like free writing and streams of consciousness and all sorts of ways you can do it, I suppose but it doesn't really matter, I suppose, it's just finding the way that gets it out for you, isn't it?

**[00:23:14] - Christine**



Definitely. And then just progress more. And if it's money that's the problem, a little sketchbook and a pencil isn't much. Save up for like some coloured pencils or a little art, like some paints. Or you could even do, get some coffee granules and dip your paintbrush in some coffee granules and paint with just coffee. So there's ways and means of doing it. It's just having the courage to look beyond the blank sheet and just doing it and taking some time for you.

**[00:23:53] - Samantha**

Yeah.

**[00:23:54] - Christine**

Take that time for you.

**[00:23:55] - Samantha**

Sort of taking the pressure off yourself to make something like the result, isn't it?

**[00:24:00] - Christine**

And just create and explore because the final products that'll come, the more you do.

**[00:24:09] - Samantha**

Yeah, that's so true. And I don't know about you, but when we're doing dance related things and my creative experience has always been in making movement based, body based stuff.

**[00:24:22] - Christine**

Absolutely.

**[00:24:23] - Samantha**

And for me, I've always, without realising it, I think I've only realised this much more recently in my life, but I've always focused on the process a lot and I'm always worried about what the outcome is because it's going to probably be shared and it's a human thing, isn't it? To think about what other people might think of that. But I'm getting better with that bit but I think for me it's been very much about my experience of doing this has been the reason I'm doing it. I'm not doing it because of the end bit.

**[00:24:52] - Christine**

No.



**[00:24:52] - Samantha**

And actually, I thought-, just made me think when I was younger, I thought, oh, I've got to, I've got to be on the stage. And every time I was on a stage, I was like, I hate this. This is terrifying. And not in a good way for me, but I loved the making of it and being with a group of people. If you're doing a group related activity, which dance often is. I can imagine with art, even if you're working on your own piece, but you're in that group environment of classes and workshops and things. There is that sort of solidarity feeling, isn't there? And that's really special. I think for me, it's the draw is that-, of that having a connection with a group of people who've all had this creative experience, and there's something really special in that as well.

**[00:25:35] - Christine**

And just sharing your sort of styles with people as well, that's really helpful, isn't it? Because then that might just trigger your creativity off even more. So yeah, the process is the most important part because I'm sure famous artists weren't always happy with their end products. I'm sure Van Gogh and whoever else looked at theirs and went, well, I don't like that, I'm putting it to one side. But they started again and they just continued to create.

**[00:26:08] - Samantha**

Yeah, just do it as much as you can in whatever way you can.

**[00:26:11] - Christine**

Absolutely.

**[00:26:14] - Samantha**

I love that. I love that. So, looking to the future then, Christine, what are your hopes? I know-, so we've got your studio now, things are moving, there's the other artists there. I know you've got plans for the next few months and things, but if you could imagine maybe a few years in the future.

**[00:26:35] - Christine**

Wow.

**[00:26:36] - Samantha**

I know. What are your hopes or maybe dreams for that?



**[00:26:42] - Christine**

So for me personally, and this might be a little bit self centered, but I'm going to go for it. I'd love to have some of my work in some decent galleries. I'd love to be able to share my work and show people that somebody who was fighting sort of other people's expectations and not really having the confidence to get the paintbrushes out and painting, that, oh, look it's here, look at my work and look what it means to me and what does it mean to you? So that's what I would really like.

**[00:27:23] - Samantha**

That's almost like all those people those years ago that said, oh, but what-, just an artist, what are you going to do with this?

**[00:27:31] - Christine**

Well, actually, here it is. This is what I'm doing and I would really like to do that, but I'd still like to continue developing sort of ways of getting people to unlock their creativity as well. That sort of element inside of me and my-, I suppose it stems a lot with nursing as well. You're caring and your passion for other people unlock their creativity, it'd be quite nice to keep that going, that momentum. And what could we do with it? So they're the two things I would really like.

**[00:28:07] - Samantha**

Cool. Well, we've put it out there now.

**[00:28:09] - Christine**

Yeah, it's out there and it'll come back.

**[00:28:11] - Samantha**

Maybe we'll listen back to this in a few years and be like, woohoo, we did it. Quite possibly.

**[00:28:17] - Christine**

That would be quite nice, wouldn't it?

**[00:28:18] - Samantha**

Yeah, that would be great. Wow. Gosh, there's so much I could talk to you about forever, I think I always say this to people, every time I start talking to people about these topics, they're really big and they're



really complex, aren't they and interesting. And I always feel like I could just go on and on and on, but we probably shouldn't.

**[00:28:41] - Christine**

Might end up making people go to sleep.

**[00:28:43] - Samantha**

We don't want to do that. But thank you, it's been wonderful. And thank you for sharing. I think there will be a lot of people that can relate to that feeling of being stifled or prevented from following something that's a deep driver for them, even if it's not art related.

**[00:28:57] - Christine**

No, exactly.

**[00:28:58] - Samantha**

And it's just great to hear from people who are going, do you know what? I'm going to do something with it, no matter what.

**[00:29:03] - Christine**

Definitely. And take that little step. Just take that little step. It's worth it, even if it's just for you.

**[00:29:10] - Samantha**

Totally, yeah. Thank you so much.

**[00:29:13] - Christine**

Thank you.

**[00:29:14] - Samantha**

And that brings us to the end of another captivating episode of Calder Navigation. Thank you for joining us on this voyage through the stories that shape Calderdale. We hope that these conversations have touched your heart, inspired your mind and reminded you of the power of human connection. As we navigate life together, let's carry these stories with us, cherishing the lessons they teach us and the bonds they strengthen.



**[00:29:37] - Samantha**

Remember, Calder Navigation is just one part of the Welland Activator Project, a collective effort to combat loneliness and isolation in our community. We encourage you to explore the various classes, workshops and walks offered through the programme and join us at our special showcase event, Welland, where we can come together and celebrate the magic of Elland and Calderdale. You can find out more about the project at [curiousmotion.org.uk](http://curiousmotion.org.uk).

**[00:30:04] - Samantha**

We would like to express our deepest gratitude to Calderdale Council Reaching communities from the National Lottery Community Fund and Arts Council England for their invaluable support in making this podcast and the Welland Activator possible. Thanks to Untold Creative for production support.

**[00:30:19] - Samantha**

If you haven't already, be sure to subscribe to Calder Navigation on your preferred podcast platform so you never miss an episode.

**[00:30:26] - Samantha**

And please help us spread the word by sharing the podcast with your friends, family and anyone who might find solace, inspiration or a sense of belonging in these stories. As we conclude this chapter, we invite you to keep exploring, keep connecting, and keep navigating the currents of life with curiosity and compassion. Remember, the journey continues and together we can make a difference. Until next time, fair winds and warm hearts.