



# substantial women

Cambridge is host to an exhibition by acclaimed portrait artist Tess Barnes showing paintings of 50 Women of Substance

Report by Lisa Millard

All women's college, Murray Edwards (formerly New Hall) must be the perfect location for Tess Barnes' exhibition titled 50 Women of Substance. What better place to celebrate the achievements, talents and contributions of a group of British Women than a college which nurtures the potential of young female students?

The list of sitters for this show, which is sponsored by First Direct and launched at London's Mall Galleries earlier this year, includes Carol Vordeman, Zandra Rhodes, Beverley Knight, Jenni Murray and Maureen Lipman, to name but a few. Tess Barnes must have a seriously impressive contacts book but, in truth, many of her sitters came forward through a process of word-of-mouth.

Tess studied art at the Chelsea College of Art and Goldsmith College and is a contemporary of Damien Hirst. She has twice been selected for the BP Portrait Award and has shown widely both at home and away. Her portraits reveal the secret to her success; there is a distinctive warmth to her style which uses both pastels and oils blending colour and

non-conventional backgrounds to reflect and frame her subjects. The results capture something at the very heart of her sitter.

Tess' inspiration for the exhibition came from the experience of becoming a mother herself when she started to question how women managed to juggle both family and a successful career – and the subjects of this exhibition bear witness to the potential of a female force.

Breast Cancer Haven has been chosen by Tess as the charity to benefit from the launch of the exhibition and tour venues and there is an accompanying book, *Women of Substance: 50 Portraits of High Profile Women of Our Time*, which costs £10 (30 per cent from each sale will go to the charity). The book is available from Cambridge branches of Waterstones, Heffers and Borders.

■ 50 Women of Substance will be at Murray Edwards College (formerly New Hall), Huntingdon Road, Cambridge, from Saturday, July 26th to Saturday, August 16th from 10am to 6pm daily. Telephone: 01223 762227 and see [www-art.newhall.cam.ac.uk](http://www-art.newhall.cam.ac.uk)

