

# Vanna Bartlett

## Background

I was born in Bradwell in Suffolk, but have lived in Norwich since I was around seven years old. I have drawn and painted for as long as I can remember. I grew up with an equal love for nature and for drawing – if I was outside then I would be watching wildlife and indoors I would invariably have a pencil in my hand.

At school I studied art to A level standard but remain largely self-taught. Much of my early work was in pen and ink, copying photographs of birds and emulating the woodcuts and engravings that I greatly admire.

In the 1990s I did a lot of volunteer conservation work on Norfolk nature reserves. This was a way to give something back for the great pleasure that wildlife has given me over the years and was also an excellent opportunity to see even more wildlife. It also gave me a greater understanding of the relationships between plants, animals and their environment. At this time I began keeping field sketchbooks and working more from life as well as memory.

In 1999 I got an allotment which soon took up all my spare time. An interest in growing fruit and vegetables soon developed into one for painting them – I would grow varieties as much for their artistic merits as for their flavours. I concentrated on painting watercolours and created a series of fruit and vegetable greetings cards.

## Approach to Work

Although the botanical work was very rewarding, I felt that I wanted to express myself more in my painting so I began experimenting with acrylics. I usually work from a combination of field sketches and memory to work out the initial idea for a painting. Often I will do detailed pencil drawings and watercolours of particular elements for reference before starting on the canvas. For fine details, such as on butterflies, I do use my own photographs and readily check the finer points in reference books. The resulting paintings are bold in both colour and composition, giving them a very individual feel.

This approach is a complete antidote to the watercolours. It allows me to loosen up and be much more expressive in my depictions whilst still striving for accuracy. For me, the process of developing a painting is sometimes more interesting than the final picture. It really makes me study the subjects more intensely and think about the relationships within the composition.

I don't like to 'sit still' with my artwork and am constantly experimenting with new techniques, often painting a particular subject several times in different media. This allows me to explore the subject more thoroughly, exploiting the qualities of each medium to different effect. This often gets reflected in subsequent paintings. I particularly like linocuts with their crisp colours and clean lines. It's a technique that I am starting to use more and more. Several of my more decorative acrylics have been greatly influenced by this method of printing.

## Recent Exhibitions

- 2012 - Printmakers' Wildlife exhibition at the BIRDscapes gallery, Glandford (May and June).  
The Dragonfly Gallery, Watton (April).
- 2011 - Norwich Assembly House (October). Pinsharp Gallery, Little Walsingham (all year).  
Norfolk Open Studios (May and June). Norwich Golden Gardens event (June).
- 2010 - Norwich Assembly House (September). Norwich Playhouse (November).  
Norfolk Open Studios (May and June).
- 2009 - Art-next-the-Sea Gallery, Wells-next-the-Sea (May), Norwich Puppet Theatre (December).
- 2008 - Two exhibitions in Holt. The Green Grocers, Norwich.
- 2007 – The Green Grocers, Norwich.

## Commissions

I am more than happy to undertake commissions – please contact me with your requirements.