

# Author Spotlight with Robin Brickman



## How did you come to create art in this manner?

My picture book illustrations combine natural science with art. I have always worked with my hands and became a professional artist when I graduated from Bennington College in 1976. Beginning in 1995, I started to transform my illustration style. I combined my interest in sewing, knitting, bookbinding, and papermaking with my long established two-dimensional work, literally lifting the images off of the page. My collages are paintings. They incorporate watercolor and acrylic paint on paper. Unlike many others who work in cut paper or collage, my work is primarily realistic and does not utilize found objects or pre-printed visual material. One reason I like working this way is because it is fun to combine different working techniques.

## Your art looks painstakingly realistic. How long does it take you to create a piece?

First, I read the manuscript and then I research the subject in order to sketch and plan the pages of the book. Those sketches become the patterns I use to cut watercolor paper out into the shapes I need. I use my hands and simple tools like scissors, tweezers, or toothpicks to cut and shape the paper. The cut paper shapes are then painted with watercolors or acrylics, glued with white glue, and assembled into their final form. The amount of work involved in creating my paintings is unimportant. However, it often takes a year or more to paint and construct all thirty-two pages of a picture book.

## What led you to combine your study of botany and graphic arts while in college? Did you envision the sort of career that you now have?

I wanted to become a botanical illustrator. Combining those two areas was a way to define my major. There is no way I could have imagined my present career ahead of time. There are no set rules or predictable paths in the arts.

## What had been your favorite animal/animals to create? Which have been the hardest?

Painting the coral reef with watercolors was a wonderful artistic experience.

However, it was a challenge to keep track of all of the species of animal life in *One Night In the Coral Sea* and difficult to create coral eggs in that book. Creating the bat wings in *Wings* was also perplexing.

## If you were asked to create art of something other than nature and animals, what would you choose?

In addition to natural science I love to work on history, poetry, and fictional works. Basically, anything that is inspiring and fun to work on. But, that is a personal choice and hard to define!

