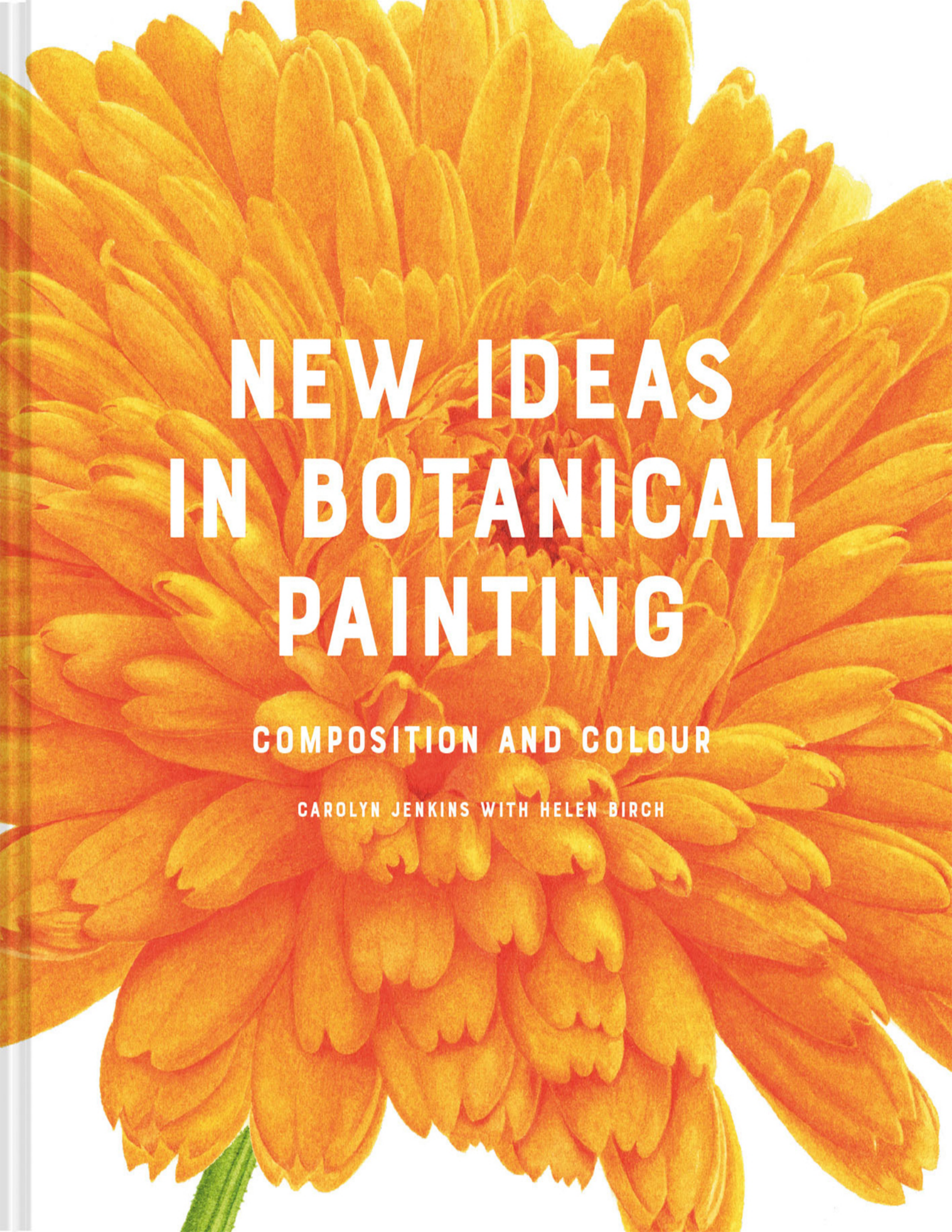
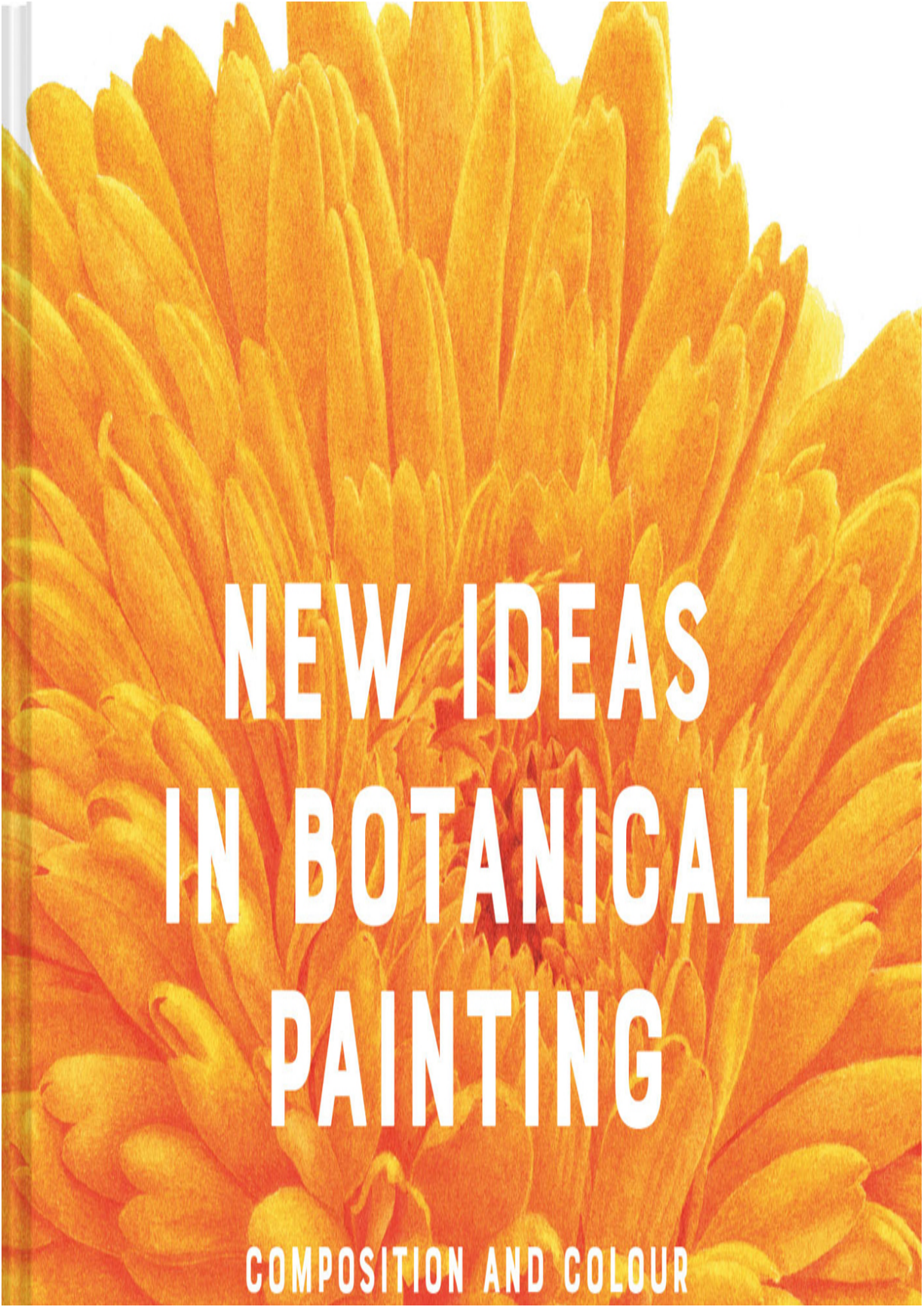




NEW IDEAS IN BOTANICAL PAINTING

COMPOSITION AND COLOUR

CAROLYN JENKINS WITH HELEN BIRCH



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Renowned botanical artist and professional gardener Carolyn Jenkins combines her love of art and gardening to create stunning compositions (often very different from traditional botanical painting) with vibrant colours that leap from the page.

The first part of this book – Grow – explores time well-spent in the garden and covers much of the traditional details of botanical art, from observation to capturing light, colour and texture. The second part – Paint – explores how Carolyn works with photography, using the computer to help with crop and composition to achieve maximum impact. Her stunning illustrations are full of colour, and her larger-than-life artworks have gained an enthusiastic following on Instagram.

This practical guide contains all the techniques and practice you need to create beautiful botanical art, plus photography, crop, composition and Photoshop® demonstrations, to bring luminous colours, textures and impact to your own work.



Purple carrots (*Daucus carota*).

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BATSFORD



Iris, jasmine and neroli. The warm sunlight shining through the translucent petals of this tall bearded iris highlighted a delicate haze of fine purple veins running through the margins of the petals.

Dedications

Carolyn Jenkins

To my sister, Nathalie, who taught me to love plants and who inspired me to begin my botanical painting journey.

Helen Birch

For my cousin, Caroline, for her especial spirit, strength and love.

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Delphinium 'Faust'.

INTRODUCTION



Jasmin, peony and ylang-ylang.

INTRODUCTION

Some people know what they want to do in life, but for me it took many years to hone in on what I love best.

Although almost all of the painting I do now is botanical, it hasn't always been the case. This focus has developed over at least 20 years as I've realized what I'm most interested in and hopefully best at. I've developed into a botanical specialist only after exploring and experiencing various other subject matters – through education, employment, adult training courses and family influence.

I feel lucky to have come from an artistic family. My father was a graphic designer and lecturer at the Royal College of Art. I'm sure that my interest in graphic compositions has come from the influence of my father's work. An upbringing in this creative environment has undoubtedly been a contributing factor to what I do now.

There was always a diverse assortment of art materials to experiment with at home, loads of wonderful art books and a large collection of paintings on the walls. I used to spend hours designing my own magazines and comics and entering artistic competitions – I remember winning a prize and a coveted Blue Peter badge in a competition!

In addition to my father being artistic, my great-aunt Joan Warburton was a painter and my great-uncle Peter O'Malley a ceramicist – and their son Liam O'Malley was a painter too. We frequently stayed with them; they were all extremely talented and a lot of fun. I know that one of the reasons I have ended up being a botanical painter is to do with my great-aunt's influence and our visits to her home. I was enthralled by the work my aunt did, her garden and particularly her paintings of plants, flowers, fruit and

vegetables. She was always working, produced hundreds of paintings in oil, gouache and watercolour, and was constantly planting new and interesting things in the garden to paint. My aunt would show me what she was working on and let me have a go with her paints. Her husband, Peter, also a hugely talented artist and a senior tutor of ceramics at the Royal College of Art, had a studio and kiln at the bottom of the garden where he would let me try out throwing pots and experimenting with glazes.

I was very lucky as a child to be so encouraged and be able to have all of these artistic experiences.



Summer Flowers (1962) by Joan Warburton. Oil painting, 61 x 76cm (24 x 30in).



Cornflower (*Centaurea cyanus*). A mixed-media portrait in watercolour and coloured pencil.

My Love of Plants

I've always been equally interested in plants and painting, and feel very lucky that these interests – gardening and botanical art – have come together in the way they have.

Working on this book has helped me to think about my dual roles as an illustrator and gardener and how they fit together. They weren't always so clearly defined, but the foundations for both were laid down early.

I am fascinated by the morphology of things, especially the form, shape, colour and structure of plants. I have always been interested in finding out about flowers, taking them apart to see how their component parts fit together and wanting to know more about how plants and flowers actually grow. This natural attraction to botany definitely preceded any actual gardening. I've only ever been distracted from it when pursuing artistic projects that weren't botanically oriented.

I first realized that I loved gardening when I had my own garden to maintain. Just doing the ordinary stuff like weeding, cutting back, pruning and deadheading brings me a lot of pleasure. As the seasons change I find I really enjoy planting up pots of beautiful spring bulbs, replacing them with dahlias for the summer and then clearing up in the autumn.



Carolyn working in her London studio.



Painted flowers, fruits and seeds from the author's garden.

My introduction to gardening at a higher level came via the influence of my sister Nathalie – a brilliant gardener – and from working with my good friend Joanne Raven, a professional gardener who was in need of extra help in busy

seasons. I learned such a lot from them both. As a result of this inspiration and experience, I decided to try to consolidate and formalize all of this new knowledge by taking a course in practical horticulture. Nathalie had previously taken the same qualifications and was now an extremely creative and knowledgeable gardener who grew many of her own plants and vegetables from seeds and cuttings in her stunning landscaped garden in France. It was this that encouraged me to want to find out a lot more.

I embarked upon a course run by the UK's Royal Horticultural Society (RHS). Some people do it out of curiosity, others do it to get work within horticulture, but I did it for both reasons. I found the course absolutely fascinating and learned a huge amount about all aspects of gardening and growing plants. I particularly liked the 'Science of Plants' modules.

It's amazing how relevant understanding the science behind plants is to becoming a good gardener. I realize now how it has improved how I paint plants too. This was affirmed recently when I received some positive feedback via my website (which is primarily to showcase my illustrations, but also mentions that I am a professional gardener). The comment I received was, 'I think the key to the authenticity of your illustrations is because you understand plants so well.' This compliment pleased me enormously.

Painting vs gardening

Being a botanical illustrator with access to gardens full of beautiful plants and flowers, as well as a gardener with nature for inspiration, have absolutely become complementary roles for me. Each provides for the other. Even their differences and contrasts help level things out. For instance, my gardening work is a perfect mixture of

physical and sociable whereas the illustration work I do is sedentary and solitary.

At certain times of the year it's not easy for me to be able to split my time between painting and gardening. If I get a big illustrating job in the spring or autumn it can be really tricky, but I do my best to fit everything in. I'm not so disciplined when I'm painting just for myself. The lack of a deadline means I'm easily distracted and I'll usually end up in my garden for part of the day – but that is never time wasted. Having said that, the illustrating has to take priority as there are usually strict deadlines.

The gardening provides inspiration for painting ideas; there is so much out there that catches my eye. My favourite part of painting is choosing the next subject I'm going to work on. I will see a plant in someone's garden and get genuinely excited about the prospect of illustrating it.



Various botanical illustrations combined into the repeat pattern *Botanical Chinoiserie*, for a wallpaper by Mineheart.



A view through dahlias, sweet peas and poppy heads in my garden.

Understanding, Education and Training

After leaving school, I did an intensive one-year Art Foundation course at St Martins School of Art in London. I felt lucky to be accepted on to the course and I really enjoyed my time there. We had a lot of fun and were encouraged to quickly develop new creative skills and ideas. Back then, it was much more common to do this foundation year before committing to higher education; we learned a variety of fine art and design techniques across a broad spectrum of subjects.

At this stage, I wasn't thinking about botanical themes at all. The course, instead, equipped me with knowledge of things like composition, line quality, tone, colour mixing, photography and how to interpret design ideas after completing visual research. With the diverse portfolio I created at St Martins I decided that a design degree was the best route for me and I was accepted at Bath Academy of Art to do a Visual Communications degree in graphic design and illustration.

This sounds like I had landed where I needed to be but unfortunately I lost my focus and as a result I left after a year. I really missed my friends and the energy of London, plus I wanted to earn some money. I wanted to be nearer the centre of things so I got a job with a film production company.

I stayed in the film business for four years, working as a receptionist and then production assistant. It was a job with many challenges and lots to learn. I had to understand so much about camera equipment, lighting, getting a large crew to a shoot on time, plus everything on the shoot had to be organized perfectly or you were in big trouble! I made

lots of very good friends and learned a huge amount about being organized, but realized that I didn't want to go on to be a producer – the business was too frantic for me. I was lucky as I had an extremely nice boss who would let me bring in my paints when we weren't busy. This meant that I was able to build up a portfolio of work and eventually I found myself an illustration agent. This enabled me to get work as a freelance illustrator in advertising and graphic design, often illustrating packaging for well-known brands.



My early illustration work combined and overlaid with text in these labels for The Natural Candy Shop.

To begin with though, most of my work was in publishing: to illustrate and visualize projects in home and interiors books – for example, step-by-step illustrated

instructions on how to make window blinds, cushion covers, upholstery and various embroidery techniques. I worked on some gardening books as well, supplementing my income by illustrating Christmas cards, with a few private commissions in between times.

In writing this book, I've tried to locate how and when the beginnings of the work I do now first arose. As soon as I started painting I worked in watercolour and have never strayed from that.

The early illustration jobs I did required real scrutiny and a lot of detail. Some of it included illustrations for gardening and woodwork and later included fruits, vegetables, and occasionally flowers. As time went on I put more and more detail into my paintings. I suppose I became very interested in painting subjects in quite a lot of detail from this time, but my botanical focus really came a bit later.

white [85-6](#)

winter [52-3](#)

yellow [79](#)

yang yang [92](#), [98-9](#)

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Illustration credits

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Matthew Axe, Creative Director, pages [2–3](#), [6–7](#), [22–23](#), [62](#) (above left), [63](#) (below), [64–65](#) (below), [68–69](#), [98–99](#), [116–117](#) (below), [119](#) (below), [123](#).

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Illustration for Superdrug beauty products, page [88](#) Anna Topalidou, designer of packaging, page [94](#).



Pelargonium 'Mystery'.

Carolyn Jenkins is a professional gardener and renowned botanical artist. She studied art and graphic design at St Martins School of Art in London and Bath Academy of Art and received a distinction for her diploma in Botanical Painting at the English Gardening School. She has won two RHS medals for her botanical paintings. Her paintings are held by the RHS Lindley Library in the UK and the Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation in the US and she has illustrated for *The Sunday Times Magazine* and many other publications, advertisements, and private commissions.

Helen Birch is the author of several drawing and painting publications including *Just Draw Botanicals*. She is also an art tutor and blogger and has been an art lecturer at several institutions across the UK. As drawdrawdraw she is the author of several highly popular blogs.