

Ginger Neilson

Children's Books ~ Author / Illustrator

www.gingernielson.com

www.gingerpixels.blogspot.com



Education: BA in Art, BA in Elementary Education from Rutgers, the State University.

Extra studies at Columbia University, NYC, University of South Carolina, Lake Forest College, Evansville University, St Thomas Aquinas College, Pepperdine University

Early experience in art included almost all of the visual educational items for classes I taught as an elementary school teacher, Christian Education teacher, fine art paintings, window displays as a travel agent, and magazine and newspaper illustrations. I also taught Art in the elementary school.

Recent experience includes the illustration of a number of children's picture books, chapter books, books I have written and illustrated, and set decoration and paintings for our local children's summer theater.

Published Books I have illustrated:

One Day in Peace
The Peace Department
Princess Caitlin's Tiara

A Birthday Wish
Little Charley Thornpaws
Daniel and the Harmonica
Pony Strings and Critter Things

Song for a Giraffe
The Adventures of Cali
My African Bedtime Rhymes
In My Bath
A Wish and a Prayer
If Wishes Were Fishes

Jellyfish Smacks and Critter Facts
Carla's Cloud Catastrophe
The Angry Little Boy
The First Flag of New Hampshire
The First Map of Maine
When Wishes Come True

Books I have written and illustrated

Either published or under contract to be published

Gunther the Underwater Elephant
Legend of the Star Giver
Blink
Alphabet Sea
Half Past Winter
The Zornkle



Client List

4RV Publishing LLC
Stemmer House Publishers
Macmillan/McGraw Hill
Oxford University Press
Sundance Publishing
Pearson/Scott Foresman
Cali Publishing
FLAX Art and Design
Shamwari Publishing
People for Peace
SCBWI Bulletin
NH Conference UCC
Stagger Lee Books
Poodle Dog Productions
The Parent Brigade

Ginger Nielson ~ Bio

I am a full time children's book illustrator and author. My home and studio sit at the top of a hill, near the edge of a forest in semi rural New Hampshire. There is a magic wand on my desk and a dragon in my basement. Everything else is nearly normal.

I came into this field later in life, after spending a number of years as an elementary school teacher and then as a travel agent. I left my day job to concentrate on children's book illustrations and I have never been happier. The experiences I have had with children and their parents and my visits to many other countries and cultures has been an added blessing. Over the past 7 years I have been fortunate enough to have been chosen to illustrate a number of delightful children's books.

When I paint with either traditional media or in the computer my goal is to create enjoyment, excitement, a bit of action or drama, and tell a story within each picture. Trained as a traditional painter, I still continue to create with paint, pen, pencils, but find that the high end painting programs I can use in the computer are a beneficial blend of both.

My small studio seems larger because of the two big windows that look out on the gardens and the forest. In New England, the weather changes frequently so there is always something interesting going on outside as well as within the studio.

I have enough space to create large works that measure in feet and enough quiet to concentrate on smaller images and children's book illustrations. My desire to create illustrations that inspire, amuse and entertain keeps me interested in all aspects of children's books and products.

In addition to the children's books I have illustrated for the traditional market, I have also created illustrations for the e-book market. I also participate in our local children's theater camp and paint many of the sets for their productions.

I do have a motto. My dad gave it to me. "Take a Chance!"

A Recent Interview: Artist of the Week ~ Public Republic.net

Ginger Nielson describes being an author or an illustrator for children's books as living in a world where dreams can come true, people can do amazing feats, and animals can talk to one another in a language only pictures can create.

Her roots in art are based upon traditional painting in oils and watercolors, but over the past 10 years she has been creating illustrations using high-end digital software. The

program allows her to use “brushes, pens, markers, watercolors, oils and more” in a non-traditional way. The combination of traditional painting and digital painting seems to make her a “tradigital” painter.

Have you named the dragon in your basement? How long has he been living in there? Does he help you with your art?

The Dragon in our basement is named SCUMME. He is the remains of a large dragon I created with Papier-mâché for a children’s theater play here in our town. His huge head was designed to move from side to side while an actor sang his part from behind the set. I have kept SCUMME safe and visit him from time to time. The help he gives me with my art is to remind me that anything is possible in the world of art and illustration. **Do you use the wand on your desk? What for?**

The wand on my desk was created for me by my daughter, and another one followed that was made by my niece. I like to have them nearby to remind me illustrations and books can create their own magic.

Why did you decide to make book illustrating your full-time career?

Since childhood I have always illustrated little stories that I made up or created paper booklets like little comic strips. As a teacher I used to make up a story about each class before they went home for the summer. I would illustrate the story and give each child a copy.

What programs do you use for creating your pieces? Do you sometimes miss traditional painting?

I still do a fair amount of traditional painting and drawing, but my main focus is digital painting. I use Painter by Corel and Photoshop. My website I design using Dreamweaver. I keep up to date with the latest version of all my software and am

learning In Design so that I can also create the design elements for any book I illustrate.

What are the Pros and Cons of “Tradigital” painting?

“Tradigital” painting, a word I made up, combines the best of both the traditional and the digital art methods. I normally begin a project with traditional pen, or pencil and paper or even some watercolors. Then I transfer it to the computer for finishing in high-end painting programs. The ability to change things without starting all over from scratch is one of the main advantages of digital painting. Also it is a ‘clean’ art. There are no spills in the computer unless you actually draw or paint one. One thing that I miss is the feel of a brush on paper, so I feed my traditional soul by stopping to paint and draw with paper and brushes and pens almost every day at some point.

Which was your favorite children book’s character growing up?

I always loved Heidi. And I loved to read stories about princesses and dogs... and want to write a book about a princess and a dog.

One of your blogs is an illustrator’s journal. Where did this idea come from? How long have you been blogging?

That is a good question. Because I don’t want to share too much personal stuff on the Internet, I decided I would share my illustrations and the process behind them. Maybe some artist “thoughts” creep in there too, but mainly it is a place to find feedback for ongoing work. The disadvantage is that people are far to kind. I don’t really mind if someone does not like my work, I want to hear about that too, because

it always helps to have another point of view.

I think I started my blog about 6 years ago, maybe five.

What advice would you give to the artists who want to become book illustrators?

I think my advice is the same as so many others. You must draw. You must read. I believe that reading books of the type you want to illustrate is a key factor in becoming who you will eventually be as an illustrator. You can learn so much from others in the field by studying their approach to a story, the point of view of an illustration, the color, texture, and design elements all form a foundation for learning the craft. I also visit the blogs and websites of many different artists and illustrators because I learn there as well.

Join organizations that support illustrators, such as the Society for Children's Book Writers and Illustrators. Create an online presence with a website and or blog. Communicate with others in your field. When you have accumulated some of your very best work, begin sending out promotional mailings to key publishers.

If you have a chance to join a critique group of your peers that is a great way to find out more about your art, your strengths and weaknesses.

What about your other blog – the adventures of Winston the Wonderhound?

I try to have time for this blog , but often, because of ongoing assignments I neglect his story. I did have it on the internet as a serialized story for several years, but maintaining an extra website was too costly so I sent Winston to his own blog. Winston was our first beagle, and was extremely prone to adventure.

The story is finished but the time to illustrate it properly is rare.

While I was working as a contributor to the AOL graphic forums I created his story and it was part of my online scrapbook for several years before that area of AOL was discontinued. So I continued his story on the internet and now on his own blog.

You're planning on publishing your own book. Could you tell us more about it?

Actually my book will be published by a small press publisher here in the US. 4RV Publishing LLC is located in Oklahoma and prints many titles each year.

I have illustrated four books for that company with another 2 due out within the next year or so. My own picture book story, "Gunther the Underwater Elephant," is due out in late 2012.

Following you father's motto "Take A Chance!", which was the most important chance you took in your life?

My dad always remarked that when people said goodbye to one another after a visit, they would say, "Take care." But he thought it would be more challenging if one would say "Take a Chance."

I am pretty sure the biggest chance I have taken over the past few years was to leave my day job and become an illustrator full time. This has not been easy, and there is a lot of hard work involved, but I am reminded every day of how much I love being an illustrator.