

## Artist Statement

**Iris Churcher**

February 28, 2022



During the summer of 2014, while teaching a course on Botanical Illustration at the Metchosin Summer School of the Arts, I was inspired by the wonderful ceramics of Seattle artist Carol Gouthro to learn about clay. This complete change of medium from coloured pencil in 2 dimensions to wonderful clay in 3 dimensions, set me on a creative adventure. After 3 years of ceramic study at VIU I applied for an MA in Glass and Ceramics at the University of Sunderland, England and consequently spent an exciting 12 months back in my home country studying and researching for the MA. After successfully completing the program I stayed in Sunderland and rented a studio at the National Glass Centre for a further 6 months - I needed to solidify my experience in a very creative environment.

In April of 2019 I returned to the island and reestablished my studio, renovated my house and garden and settled back to life here without a kiln and not entirely sure how I was going to integrate these new ceramic skills and interests into my creative life. I was able to use the ceramic studio at VIU again, but covid restrictions soon put a stop to that.

Before leaving for the UK I had dabbled with papier-mâché as an alternative medium to clay, and found that it lent itself well to my illustrative and 3 dimensional interests. Thus I've spent the 'covid years' experimenting with the medium rather than exploring ideas.

When Fran invited me to share this exhibition space and after discussions about its theme, we decided to create a show to make our audience smile. Therefore I searched through my work to find what I thought might achieve this. Thus there are personal illustrations, magazine commissions, doodles and playful papier-mâché. Some are very current and others are from as far back as 2001, when Dogs in Canada first asked me to illustrate an article on 'badly behaved dogs'. As an illustrator it is so much fun to create a humorous rendition of an animal, especially if it can be done without being too 'cute'.

I no longer advertise myself as an illustrator or seek commissions, preferring to explore, experiment and develop my own ideas in whatever media appeals to me. Currently it is papier-mâché, although I have a large oil painting on the easel as well.

Thank you for taking the time to visit our show. I do hope you enjoy it as much as we have enjoyed creating it.

## A Few Exhibition Photos

My photos of the show aren't that good, so here are just a few. They are all my work except for the two interesting camping sculptures by Fran Benton. I'll add her work into this document once she gives me permission. I provided a folder of this information to visitors of the show.



# Notes on the artwork

## Personal artwork

- Bo Series
- Mexico Memories
- Old Mother Hubbard
- Doodles
- Things That Go Bump In The Night
- Papier-mâché

## Commissioned illustrations

### Dogs In Canada Magazine

- Dogs Behaving Badly
- Cats Behaving Badly

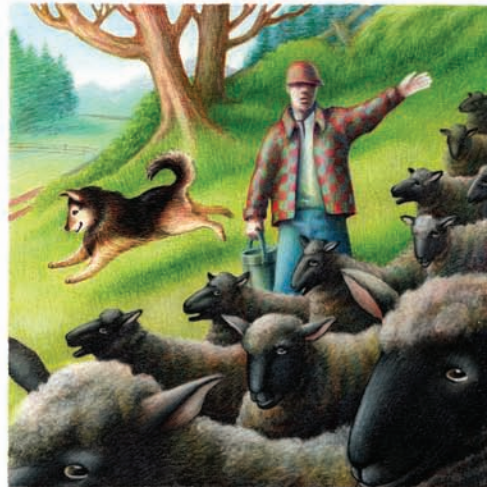
### Beautiful BC Magazine

- Bear Encounters
- Frogzilla

## A Day in the Life of Bo

These illustrations were created after our dog Bo died. They were intended to be made into a book, but work commitments and studies took precedence and these were all I achieved.

*Coloured pencil on watercolour board*



## Mexico Memories

This painted collage references my experiences of Conchas Chinas, near Puerto Vallarta, Mexico. I enjoyed three excellent holidays with good companions. It includes Fred the lizard who lived in a drain outside the apartment, the abundant bouganvillia flowers, the sea relected in stepping stones at the botanical gardens, palm trees and the nightly pirate ship that displayed fireworks every night after sunset.

*Acrylic on board*



## Old Mother Hubbard

The Old Mother Hubbard nursery rhyme, although earlier in origin, is generally attributed to Sarah Catherine Martin (1768–1826). It describes the adventures of Mother Hubbard trying to please her dog. I chose this as a personal project and have lined up friends for the various characters in the rhyme. I modelled for Old Mother Hubbard and my late dog Bo is the dog and I've added my very much alive 18 year old cat Tigaah!

Out of curiosity I made a shallow relief in clay from the first illustration. The direction of the light alters the way the image is read.

*Coloured pencil on watercolour paper and clay*

### The Full Version

Old Mother Hubbard  
Went to the cupboard,  
To give the poor dog a bone:  
When she came there,  
The cupboard was bare,  
And so the poor pecker had  
none.

She went to the baker's  
To buy him some bread;  
When she came back  
The dog was dead!

She went to the undertaker's  
To buy him a coffin;  
When she came back  
The dog was laughing.

She took a clean dish  
to get him some tripe;  
When she came back  
He was smoking his pipe.

She went to the alehouse  
To get him some beer;  
When she came back  
The dog sat in a chair.

She went to the tavern  
For white wine and red;  
When she came back  
The dog stood on his head.  
She went to the fruiterer's  
To buy him some fruit;  
When she came back  
He was playing the flute.

She went to the tailor's  
To buy him a coat;  
When she came back  
He was riding a goat.

She went to the hatter's  
To buy him a hat;  
When she came back  
He was feeding her cat.

She went to the barber's  
To buy him a wig  
When she came back  
He was dancing a jig.

She went to the cobbler's  
To buy him some shoes;  
When she came back  
He was reading the news.

She went to the sempstress  
To buy him some linen;  
When she came back  
The dog was spinning.

She went to the hosier's  
To buy him some hose;  
When she came back  
He was dressed in his clothes.

The Dame made a curtsy,  
The dog made a bow;  
The Dame said, Your servant;  
The dog said, Bow-wow.

This wonderful dog  
Was Dame Hubbard's delight,  
He could read, he could dance,  
He could sing, he could write;  
She gave him rich dainties  
Whenever he fed,  
And erected this monument  
When he was dead.





The rhyme apparently has an early origin in politics. Here is a quote from the website [https://nurseryrhymesmg.com/rhymes/old\\_mother\\_hubbard.htm](https://nurseryrhymesmg.com/rhymes/old_mother_hubbard.htm)

The meaning of the nursery rhyme Old Mother Hubbard goes back to the first half of the sixteenth Century. It was the time when King Henry VIII ruled England, and Cardinal Thomas Wolsey, who served as Lord Chancellor, was the most important and influential statesman of his kingdom.

The king had a problem: after sixteen years of marriage to Catherine of Aragon, he still had no heir to the throne. Before they had gotten married, a special papal bull was required, because Catherine was a widow of his brother (Prince Arthur) who had died at a young age just a couple of months after them getting married. Against such marriage was a passage of Scripture in the Book of Leviticus: "And if a man shall take his brother's wife, it is impurity: he hath uncovered his brother's nakedness; they shall be childless."—the reason why special permission from the Pope was required. And now he wanted a divorce so as to marry his mistress Anne Boleyn. The task to get permission from the Pope was, of course, assigned to Cardinal Wolsey. He failed, lost his power, was arrested, and died in prison. The Cardinal as Mother Hubbard

This is what the first verse—that is much older than the others of the longer version speaks about: the Old Mother Hubbard is the Cardinal, the doggie is King Henry VIII, the bone is the divorce he wished to have and the cupboard refers to the Catholic Church.



## Things That Go Bump In The Night

An illustration created when I was part of an online uillustration group. A response to the title theme.

*Coloured pencil on watercolour paper*

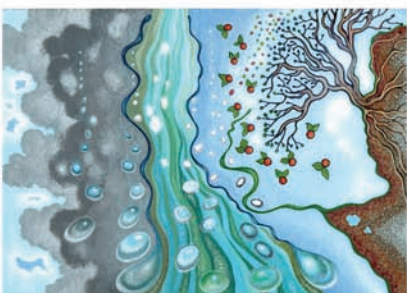




## Doodles ...

Whilst studying for the MA in Glass at Ceramics in Sunderland, I lived in one room (shared kitchen) at the university residences. When I wasn't at the university studios of an evening I wanted something to occupy me. So I started doodling in black pen in paper, usually with no idea in mind, and with the rule that I couldn't erase or alter anything. I would then paint the doodle in acrylic and adjust if necessary. Over the past 4 years these are the result.

*Black ink and Acrylic paint.*



These two are exceptions in that although the technique was the same, they were inspired directly by a weekend at the Astley Castle, now owned by English Heritage.

It was the home of the Grey family, of whom Lady Jane Grey was a member. Her bid to be Queen of England after the death of Edward VI lasted only a few days before she lost her head. This painting includes her two uncles who were the force behind the bid for the throne.

Next to Astley castle is Astley Church, which has the most delightful wooden benches carved with animals. These inspired the frolicking birds, boars and dogs of this painting.



## Sandra

Friend Sandra was kind enough to let me photograph her and attempt a life size portrait. It turned out to be just a bit larger than life.

The scarf is of a chintz design I created after studying some of the Indian chintz fabrics that were so popular in the 18th century.

*Papier-mache on wire frame, acrylic painted, varnished.*



## Bird Reflections

This began as an experiment to create a bowl on a pedestal and no more. However the bird decided to arrive and then one morning in contemplation, the inverted sky suggested itself. The quiet colouring of the female sparrow was the natural choice to harmonize with the bowl colouring.

The bowl was made using a cooking bowl as a mould, and the column support is a cardboard and wire mesh tube.

I have an interest in Romanesque architecture, so columns are often in mind.

*Papier-mache on wire frame, acrylic painted, varnished.*



## An Aesop Fable

### Figures Are Not Always Facts

Exploring and experimenting with shallow bowls and illustration. This fable has always made me smile.

*Papier-mache made from recycled egg cartons, painted with acrylic paint.*

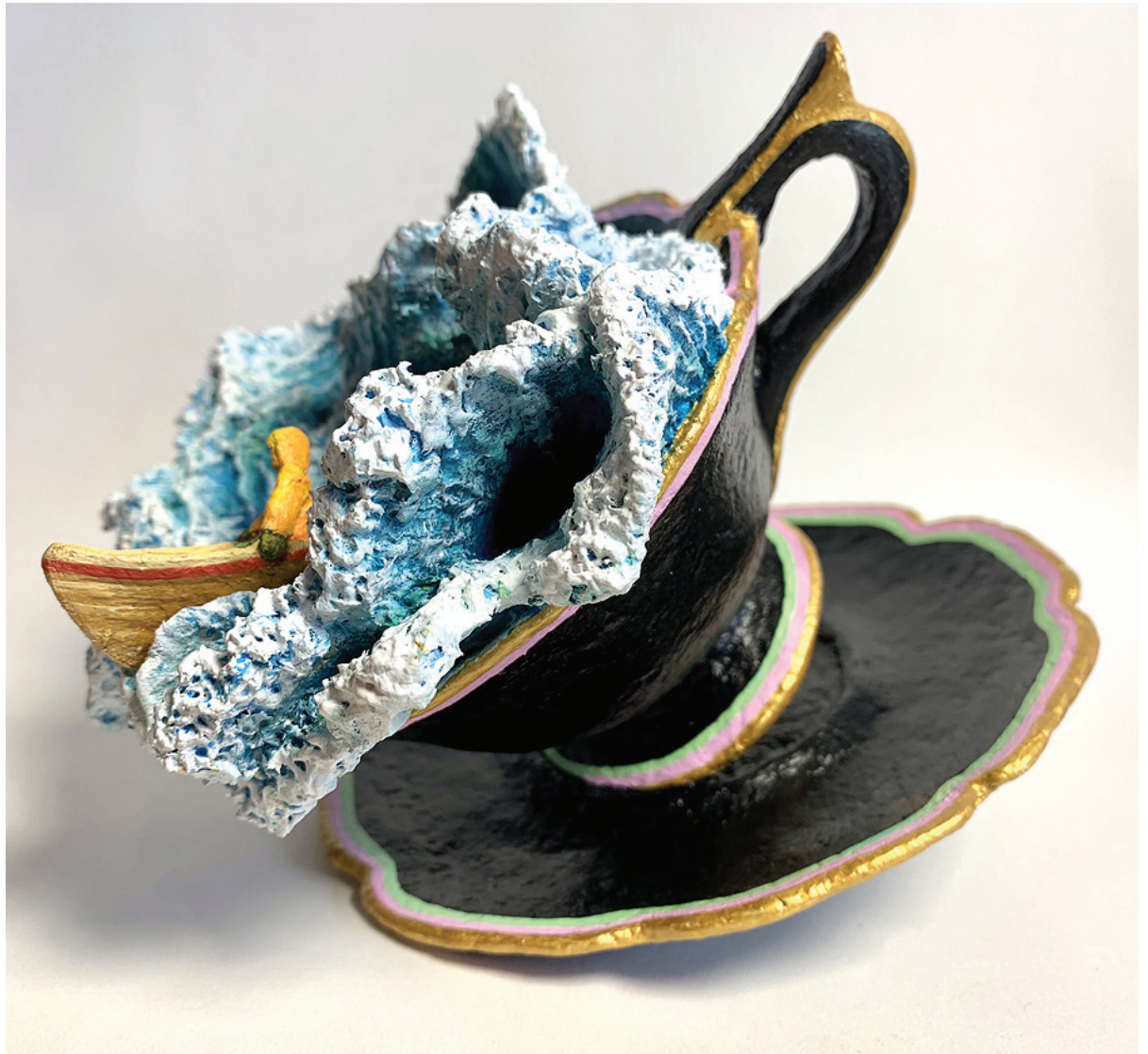


## Storm in a Teacup

While studying for an MA in Glass and Ceramics I focused on teapots and all things related to drinking tea. One idea I explored was 'A Storm In a Teacup', but I didn't have time to create it.

On my return to Canada and without a kiln, I chose to explore the medium of papier-mâché. All kinds of materials can be incorporated into a 3D object using this medium, plus there is great freedom in painting the surface.

*Papier-mâché made with wire mesh, homemade paper pulp, and painted with acrylic paint and varnished with a UV protective varnish..*



## An assortment of characters

Created just for experimentation and fun.

Birds are endlessly fun to create.

Rats are intelligent and lend themselves to representing human characteristics.

People - too many types to count, but I enjoy speculating on some I've seen and imagined.

*Papier-mache on newspaper and wire frames, acrylic painted, varnished.*



# **Commissioned Artwork**

## **Dogs In Canada Magazine**

Dogs Behaving Badly

Cats Behaving Badly

## **Beautiful BC Magazine**

Bear Encounters

Frogzilla



## Cats Behaving Badly

Created for an article advising strategies for avoiding these illustrated problems.

**Dogs in Canada magazine**

Art Director - Bill Whitehead

*Coloured pencil on Arches watercolour paper*



## Dogs Behaving Badly

Created for an article advising strategies for avoiding these illustrated problems.

**Dogs in Canada magazine**

Art Director - Bill Whitehead

*Coloured pencil on Arches watercolour paper*



## Beautiful British Columbia Magazine

These illustrations are just a few of those that I regularly created for the magazine. The bear illustrations accompanied an article on uncomfortable bear encounters. The Frogzilla illustrated the increasing concerns about the invasion of North American Bullfrogs on Vancouver Island.

*Coloured pencil on watercolour paper*  
*Art director: Ken Seabrook*



## IRIS CHURCHER

irischurcher@shaw.ca

www.flyingbetty.ca



## EDUCATION

**2018 MA Glass & Ceramics**, University of Sunderland, Sunderland, UK.

**1993 M.A. Illustration**, Syracuse University, Syracuse, New York, U.S.A.

**1969 B.A. Graphic Design**, London College of Printing (University of the Arts), London, UK.

## EDUCATOR

**1990 - 2008 Full-time Instructor in Graphic Design Program,**

Vancouver Island University (formerly Malaspina University-College), Nanaimo, BC.

**Subjects taught:** Illustration I, II, III, Computer Graphics I, II, III, Typography, Graphics for Publishing, Graphics for Printing, Colour Theory and 2D Design.

**Systems:** Mac OS.

**Software:** QuarkXpress, Adobe Illustrator, Adobe Photoshop, InDesign, XHTML and CSS.

**1985-1990 Community Education Courses and Workshops**, Duncan , BC.

**Subjects taught:** Mandalas, Coloured Pencil, Drawing on The Right Side of the Brain

**Metchosin Summer School of the Arts, Metchosin, BC.**

Botanical Illustration Workshops - Two one week and one weekend courses

## ILLUSTRATOR

### CANADA

Iris currently illustrates from her home on Vancouver Island, British Columbia

**Illustration Clients:** Sleeping Bear Press, Beautiful BC Magazine, Dogs In Canada Magazine, Rutherford Shopping Mall, Malaspina University-College, Sunrise Publications, B.C. Government, McKim Advertising, MacCann-Erickson, Eatons, Ikea, Western Living, Vancouver magazine, Forestalk, Artec.

### UNITED KINGDOM.

**Illustration Clients:** Saunders-James Design, Good Housekeeping, Womancraft, Phoebus Publishing, Marshall Cavendish, British Tourist Board, Boots, Marks & Spencer.

## PROFESSIONAL RECOGNITION

**1997 GDC Awards** Honourable Mention. Vancouver Island Chapter for Self Promotion illustrations.

**1992 United Nations Environmental Program** seasons greeting card.

**1980 Andy Award of Merit** presented by the Advertising Club of New York for Illustrations for the Honey Up yogurt campaign.