

ILLUSTRATOR



In This Issue...

- Bianka Guna – Graduate of the Year
- Rollie Brandt – Painting Kids... just being kids
- 2006 Professional Competition Winners
- 2006 Annual Art Competition Winners
- 2006 Charles Schulz Scholarship Winners

Rollie Brandt
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– Rollie Brandt – Painting Kids... just being kids!

Childhood Memories

Growing up in Minnesota – *Land of 10,000 Lakes* – Rollie experienced “lake country” first hand, with rivers, lakes and ponds everywhere it seemed. Her childhood memories are of close family ties, in a friendly little community not far from Minneapolis. It was a simpler time, when kids could grow up slowly, with much personal time for exploration and wonder. Those days were idyllic for Rollie and she captures that same feeling of innocence, peace and calm in each of her paintings today.



Rollie Brandt signing posters at the Fall Festival Original Art Show

Rollie always thought of herself as a creative, motivated artist. In school, other students knew her as “the artist,” and she often did extra projects for teachers and church clubs. She even started a sign painting business while still in high school.

When she was 17, she enrolled in Art Instruction Schools “to learn more about commercial art, or ‘graphic design,’ as it is called now. I wanted a job in that field – I never even thought about being a painter then. Three years later, I graduated from Art Instruction Schools with new art skills and a new sense of what it means to be an accomplished artist. I’m really glad my parents gave me that gift.”

“My favorite technique at first was pencil drawing. All I wanted to draw was horses – I really had a hard time drawing or painting people at first, but the Instructors were very helpful as I worked through the figure drawing lessons. The most important thing Art Instruction Schools taught me was self-discipline. That was a HUGE life lesson. The assignments also made me *draw things I wouldn’t have drawn on my own*. That was really good for me.”

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"Fishing Buddies"

"The annual fishing trip with the guys is a time for everyone to share stories, meals, laughs and best of all, time fishing together out on the lake!"

Starting in Graphic Design

Over the next several years, she tried her hand at commercial art, working for several small printing companies. "I did not go to college at all, but became a graphic artist right out of high school and learned even more on the job – creating illustrations and layouts for advertising, pasting the ads together in the keyline department and learning about the many steps in the printing process." She married her high school sweetheart and, as her children grew up, she freelanced from her home, creating graphics, advertising, brochures and corporate logos. She learned new computer programs by working through the tutorial books – page by page – but her real dream was to become a published artist, and that's just what she did.

She would paint while her kids took their afternoon naps. She would paint between running errands. She would paint whenever she could. "My children probably figured that *every* mom had a studio and drawing board!"

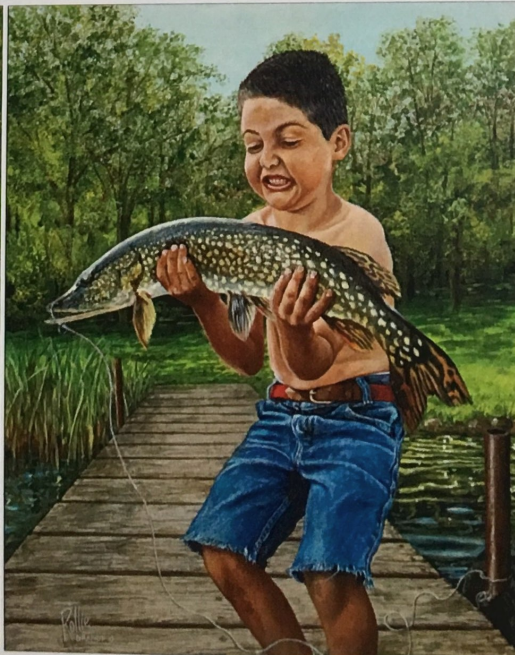
She took slides of her best work and sent out packages to a short list of art publishers and waited for the response. She got mostly polite rejection letters back, but one local company, Wild Wings, recognized her talent and sensitivity and offered to sell her originals. The first one sold for \$1,900. "It's always been hard for me to part with an original, but it's the only way to get into the business." That was the big step Rollie was looking for! Her largest original paintings now sell for over \$5,000 each. That business relationship made all the difference in her world and in her career.

"It's always been hard for me to part with an original, but it's the only way to get into the business."

"My BIG Fish"



"I'll Show Ya..."



"It's a Northern!"



"Boy, It's Heavy!"

"Our kids learned to fish some 20 years ago, at our family's lake home. It had a dock with a rusty metal chair, a can of worms and a couple of cane poles. This painting is a tribute to that memory."

Wild Wings is a fine arts publishing company, which sells artwork to over 4,500 retail art dealers, frame shops and gift stores throughout the US and Canada. Because Rollie has a whole company promoting her artwork to customers year-round, she can concentrate on creating new art every day. "I want to use my time painting and leave the printing, marketing and promotion to the experts."

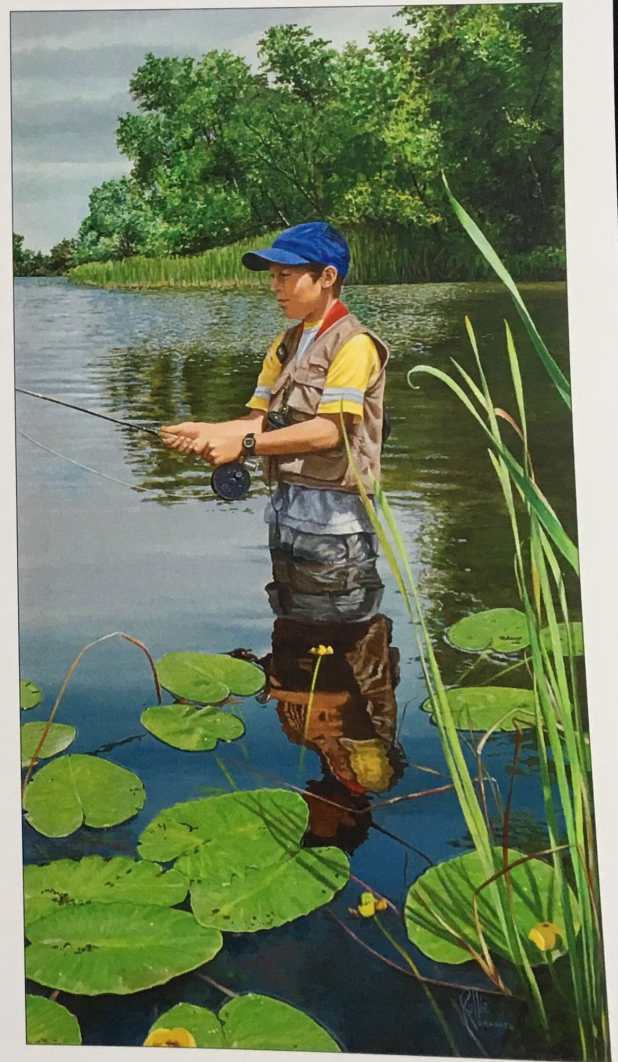
Each year, Wild Wings sponsors a *Fall Festival Original Art Show*, to showcase the artwork of over 50 artists which they represent. It's a great opportunity for the artists to meet collectors and others who have purchased their work.

"That weekend is always fun, after working basically alone for a year, to meet the public and hear from people who enjoy your art, and visit with the other artists... seeing what they have painted and getting inspired by them."

"I want to use my time painting and leave the printing, marketing and promotion to the experts."



"Grandpa's Girl"



"Sunny Cast"

Series of four paintings

"When a little boy catches his first really BIG fish, half the fun is re-living it and sharing his 'prize catch' story with anyone who will listen. Same goes for grown-up boys!"

"I had SO much fun painting these four, especially 'Show & Tell'... the cork, the wrinkled paper with the lines, making it look like school paper; painting the crayon letters to look like a little boy's penmanship... and the plastic push pins."

"At the Fall Festival, people would actually reach over to touch the pins, to see if they really were painted on!"

All Acrylic on Masonite



"Show & Tell"

"Fly fishing for panfish on a peaceful lake is both fun and rewarding. I enjoyed painting the environment as much as the subject matter on this one."



"Heavy Downpour"

"Helping Mom with Spring planting is fun and educational. You learn what young plants need to grow, and how to care for them. When Mom runs in for refreshments, a good helper might just give the flowers a drink, too!"

Getting Published

Wild Wings does not only sell the artist's original artwork to collectors or art dealers around the world, they can print reproductions of an artist's work, and offer them in limited editions, through their retail gallery collection, direct mail catalogs or through their online store. Rollie has over 40 originals and 20 reproduction prints which can be purchased online. Check out the *Fine Art Prints* section at www.wildwings.com to see more of her work. Wild Wings also keeps track of the printed inventory and the actual distribution of all artwork sold. Publishers generally do all the work printing, marketing, selling, licensing, packaging and shipping – and the artists collect the commissions.



"Kid Brother Round-up"

(Big brother) "After a long hard day ropin' cattle and huntin' down outlaws, why not throw a lasso around yer sticky fingered little brother, and go in fer some grub... Mom won't miss him!"

(Little brother) "Hey! I helped him look for cows and bad guys all day! NOW what's he doin'? Good thing I got my sucker, 'cause I'm gettin' hungry!"



"Making Faces"

"Just before Halloween, we could hardly wait for Dad to carve our pumpkins. Of course, he couldn't do it without our artistic guidance and direction! We would draw – he would cut – then we'd get to scoop out all the seeds. The grand finale was when Dad lit the candles!"



"Daddy's Hunting Dog"

"There is more to a hunting dog's life than just the short season out in the field. The rest of the year, the activities of family life are as varied as each of its members. A good family dog, just like a good hunting dog, will proudly put up with just about anything to please the people he loves!"

Wild Wings handles the licensing of Rollie's artwork too, for application onto retail merchandise or for other products like magazine covers, product packaging or fundraising programs. In addition to magazine covers, Rollie's images have shown up on retail products and merchandise, like calendars, collectible plates and craft kits.

While Wild Wings has it's own customers, it is also owned by Cabela's – the largest mail-order, retail and internet outdoor outfitter for hunting, fishing and camping gear in the world, with 30 stores in 24 states and Canada. It's a great opportunity for artists to get that kind of national exposure!

Rollie may finish 8-12 new paintings each year, but Wild Wings will choose the ones to reproduce as prints. "I love seeing my work published and the nice thing is, it can be enjoyed by more people!"

Wild Wings, and other art publishers, are always looking for new artists from different areas around the US and Canada, as most local artists really know the local scenery and the most meaningful subjects and can capture them with a local flair. That's important in selling fine art. As Rollie says, "You've got to paint what you love." And it usually shows in the work!

"I love seeing my work published."

A Balanced Work Life

For a little extra income, Rollie also works part-time as a detail artist for Department 56, a manufacturer of seasonal giftware and collectible home decorations. She works with other artists on the new product designs, painting the prototypes for next season's merchandise. She loves the flexible schedule and has found a nice balance in her life as a painter... some *structured* painting time along with her *personal* painting time.

For fun, she also does Face Painting for kids at county fairs, corporate and private parties, company picnics, daycare parties and special events. She calls this her "fun job," because she gets to dress up in costume, goof around with young kids and work with her daughter – and she gets paid for it! "Painting a moving kid is challenging and they say the cutest things. They are always so proud of their face painting."

"You've got to paint what you love."

"Almost every road I travel from home offers a view of a peaceful family farm. As these scenes are steadily replaced by development, I'm inspired to try to preserve some of them. No matter how many times a farm changes ownership, it always keeps the name of its original occupant among the locals."



"Nels' Place"



"Dewey's Place"



"Alvin's Place"



"A Century of Autumns"



"Frostbite Flats"

Daily Routines

Most days, her daily schedule starts early, around 6 AM, with breakfast and a morning workout before 8 AM, and then she starts to focus on the most important projects for that day.

She doesn't paint all day long, or even every day, but tries to balance her daily schedule, with family, meals and painting at the top of the list, taking well-deserved breaks to prevent eye strain. "It's good to step away from a painting briefly and take a fresh look at it later." She may choose to paint for a short while after an evening meal, but she's really a "morning person" and never paints late into the night. "I LOVE to paint and I feel like I was born to be an artist!"

"I LOVE to paint and I feel like I was born to be an artist!"



"Northern Tike" "On a nice warm winter day, it's fun to go outside and sit on the ice and fish with Dad."

She keeps her one-room studio well-organized and usually has several paintings going at once. She keeps track of her time on each project, just like she did as a graphic designer, because people often ask her how long it took to do a specific painting.

In addition to her acrylic paints and brushes, she uses cheap and available supplies from around her home – plastic containers cut in half to hold water or brushes, paper towels to blot spills, metal pie pans to hold paint for big projects, or cardboard wrapped with aluminum foil as her palette for small projects, spatulas to help mix paint and small sponges to create texture and random patterns in her scenery. Those handy little tools are everywhere. Kitchen plastic wrap will keep her paints from drying out for weeks, "but you have to get all the air bubbles out!"

She uses a small digital camera to take photographs of her subjects or scenes – usually taking over 20 pictures for one normal size painting. She prints these reference photos directly from her Mac computer and keeps these photos in a large file – going back many years!

She will sometimes put these images together using her computer, but usually she makes composites by "cutting and pasting, the old-fashioned way. Once I start working, I have pictures spread all over my drawing board. I also keep plenty of 'progress shots' of my paintings in various stages. For 'miniatures,' I usually use only one reference photograph."

Rollie is very creative in many ways and has shared these professional tricks with other artists.



“Way up north, a ‘fish house’ is like a little cabin. Inside, they are warm and cozy, with all the comforts of home. You can sleep in a warm bunk, eat scrambled eggs cooked on a stove, play games and fish through a hole in the floor! It’s like a winter resort on ice. I’m always intrigued by the interesting assortment of colors and styles of the houses.”

Sharing her Art and Experiences

“I enjoy helping young artists learn, so I go back to local schools and talk to the kids and show them things... I figure lots of people helped teach me, so I like to give back.” She often gives presentations to junior high school art classes, relating back to her training as a graphic designer. “I tell young art students, ‘Art is everywhere. Even on a simple food box, you can see photography, typesetting, color choices, layout, composition...’ ”

“I also take thousands of digital photos each year for family events and reference purposes. I’m a very good photographer and fussy about quality. I have created dozens of greeting cards for people – birthday, get-well, personal events, church activities... I like to volunteer my time and talents. It makes people feel good. I feel my art ability is a gift, and I love to share it. I’ve even been an art judge for several children’s art competitions, including state and county fairs and the Minnesota Junior Duck Stamp competition.”

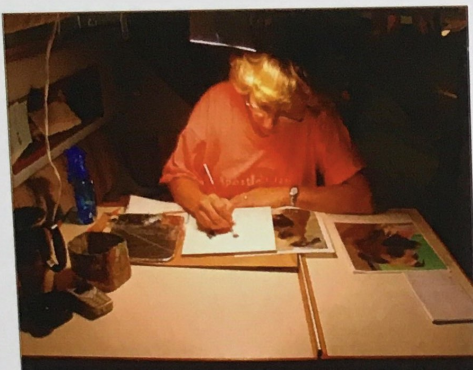
“Some of the kids in my paintings look like just any average kid and sometimes parents will see themselves, or their own children, in my pictures. I’ve heard many emotional stories from parents – even a few whose child had passed away. My painting seemed to give them comfort and I often donate a print to that family dealing with such a loss. You have to share your art with people... you can’t just keep it for yourself.”

***“You have to share your art
with people...
you can’t just keep it
for yourself.”***



“Every kid remembers the excitement of barreling down a snowy hill! These old sleds could really fly! I never quite got the hang of the steering, and we all took our share of spills, which only added to the thrill.”

“Grandpa’s Sled”



"Rollie in her work space..."



"...starting with the eyes..."



"...then the nose..."

Sequence Painting

"On weekends, I like to paint when we are relaxing on our boat. There is not a lot of work space available, but I always bring my paints and a miniature or two to work on. When the weather is bad, or in the quiet evenings, I love nothing more than to sit and paint. I use a "full-spectrum" light bulb, so I can see the colors correctly, even though I am working indoors. I always paint on un-tempered Masonite. It's more sturdy than canvas and transports well. I draw the original pencil sketch at home so it's all ready to paint."

"I usually like to start with the background first and then move forward... except with my dog portraits. On those, I start with the eyes. For me, the eyes are the hardest part, so I feel less pressure getting them done first.

It's fun to see them looking back at me right away! Then I move out to work on the fur. There is a lot of color that I see in a brown dog! You'd be surprised... there is even a bit of violet color in the shadows and blue in the black nose.

"I use a very tiny brush, which can be hard on the eyes, so I look away, into the distance every now and then, to refocus my eyes. Good light is absolutely essential! On this portrait of Otis, I just worked outward from the center of the face, leaving the background white."

"I started painting with acrylics many years ago, because it's easier to work with water than the fumes of oil-based paint and turpentine. And I like that acrylics dry fast, so I don't have to wait days for the paint to dry. I can start and sometimes finish these miniatures in just one weekend."

"I paint the back of these miniature paintings white and, using a gold pen, I write a personal message to the dog owners, and then add the date and my signature."

"Over the next week, I'll place it in different rooms in my home, and look at it often. *Many times* I see something that needs to be fixed. Then, I tweak and change minor things that most people wouldn't even notice, but they are important to me. When I am finally done, I spray an even layer of protective Kamar varnish on the front, to add a slight gloss finish and keep the paint from yellowing with age. Then I just can't wait to start the next one!"



Original photograph of Otis



"Otis"

Completed painting

"I tweak and change minor things that most people wouldn't even notice, but they are important to me."

Philosophy of Painting Kids

Rollie Brandt paints real kids – they don't look like models. Look closely and you will see they have dirty fingernails, scrapped knees, tan lines and torn clothing. This attention to real detail helps her subjects come to life – and adds a timeless feeling to her paintings. She shows us the joy of being a child again.

“Children today are under so much pressure... to perform, to compete and to excel. They are sometimes so busy in organized activities, there is barely enough time to ‘just play’... to walk in puddles, make forts or build snowmen.”

“Through my paintings, I try to depict kids happily ‘just being kids,’ much like it was when I was growing up. I would be outside for hours, sledding until I was soaked. Or, in the summer, I would sit on the dock all day with worms and dirty fingers, hoping to catch a sunfish or two. There was always time to be a kid then. Today, I strive to paint scenes of a carefree childhood... and I hope people smile when they see my work.”

“I love being an artist... it gives me the chance to be creative in so many ways. Sometimes in a “kid” painting, I will include the child’s name, hidden somewhere in the detail. They really like that. When Wild Wings heard about it, they loved it too. They have fun in the gallery, sharing that with the customers interested in buying that print.”

*“I love being an artist...
it gives me the chance to
be creative in so many ways.”*

“I don’t want to paint kids posed, cleaned or dressed up. I paint kids just being kids, doing what they enjoy most.”

Rollie does this very well and has become a very successful artist along the way. Congratulations, Rollie, and thank you for letting us re-live those charming childhood moments, through your beautiful paintings.



“The swamp is alive with activity and it doesn't take a young boy long to figure that out! A jar from Mom and an afternoon of careful hunting means you'll be able to watch tadpoles swim and grow into little frogs, right before your eyes.”

“Little Frog Legs”

"The river is where I learned to relax. Life slows down inside as well as outside the boat. There is time to appreciate the scenery and simply study a seagull or feel the breeze."

Rollie Brandt



"River Traffic Cop"

"Fowl Mood"



"The family farm provides a nice life for a chicken. She can go in and out of her house as she pleases, lay an egg, take a nap, scratch around in the gravel, eat chicken feed and socialize."

"Drover"



"I love dog portraits. I must have taken over 20 photos of this Springer Spaniel, to get just the right expression. I finally got the look I wanted when she was outside the screen porch, wishing she were inside with the rest of us, giving us this longing look in her eyes."



"Young Pelican"

"I enjoyed watching this beautiful bird floating near the lift bridge in the Duluth Harbor. I loved painting the soft feathers, interesting beak and the rippling water."

"I graduated from Art Instruction Schools with new art skills and a new sense of what it means to be an accomplished artist."



"Assorted Flavors"

"While on a visit to a friend's ranch, we were walking through their pastures and came upon this content group of horses, grazing without a care in the world. I was most inspired by their varied colors, and the lighting."