Words **Jennie Musgrove**

BRIGHT AND BEAUTIFUL

Illustrator Hollie Brown first caught our attention at last year's Great Northern Contemporary Craft Fair. Her eye-catching designs are whimsical, humorous and full of vibrant colour – and we were delighted to find out more about Hollie's inspirations, ambitions and success so far

"When I'm short of ideas the first thing I do is jump on my bike – it usually results in me racing back home to write down my ideas before I forget them," says illustrator and print maker Hollie Brown. Although it happens to us all, it's hard to imagine Hollie having a single day lacking in inspiration, so prolific and versatile has her portfolio of work been since she graduated in 2007 with a First Class degree in Surface Pattern Design.

Armed with her impressive qualification from Staffordshire University, Hollie secured a place at New Designers, a prestigious graduate event

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All Things Spring

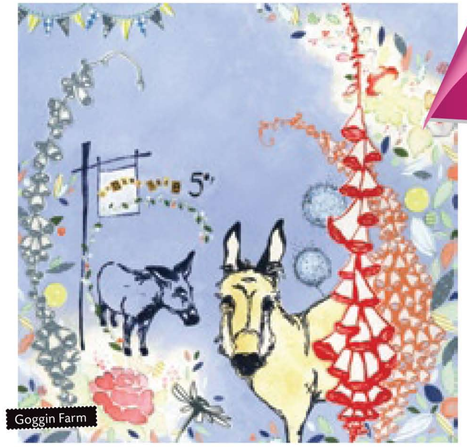
Betty Ginger

held every year in London. Exhibiting at such a high profile show led to Hollie winning the New Designers Hallmark Award 2007 and being short-listed for the New Designers Tiger Print Award. "Winning the Hallmark Award was my proudest achievement," says Hollie. "I had worked so hard at university just to be offered a place at the show, and was completely overwhelmed when I won the award."

Following such success, it wasn't long before the offers of work placements were flooding in, and Hollie worked for several leading design studios and publishing houses within the greetings card industry. After gaining an insight into how the industry worked, Hollie decided to go freelance and work from her home in rural Leicestershire. "I felt my creative potential could be released more readily in my own environment so I started to work at home," she says. "I turned half of my living room into a studio and transformed the garden shed into a silk-screen printing workshop for one!"

Working in such an idyllic setting provides ample opportunity for inspiration, as Hollie explains: "In the summer months my printing workshop extends into my garden, I set up drawing easels and workbenches outside. The washing line becomes a very handy place to hang wet prints! My studio window looks out onto a field and I often get distracted watching the wildlife change throughout the seasons, from mad March hares to the winter robin. I couldn't think of a better place to work."

During her first year of freelancing, Hollie completed commissions for Hallmark Cards, Marks & Spencer, UK Greetings, Museums & Galleries Ltd and Creative Moments. This led to queries from elsewhere, as Hollie explains: "After a year of freelancing, a local gallery enquired



Goggin Farm

about my original artwork. Although I was keen to take up the offer, I didn't want to let my originals go!"

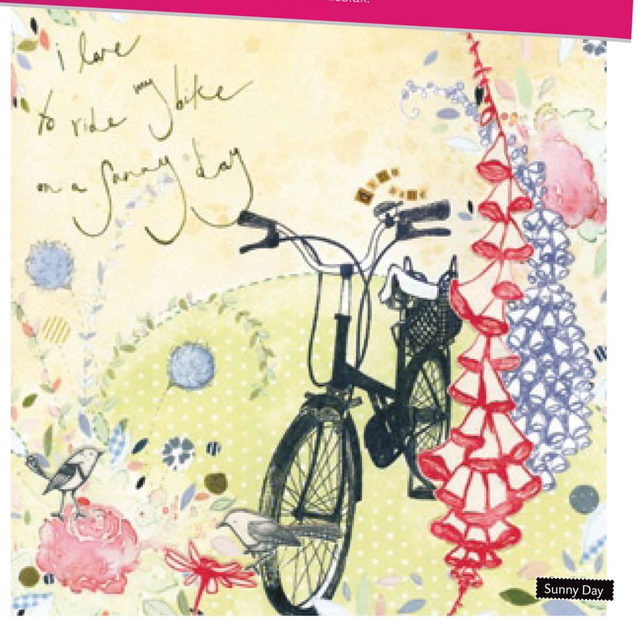
Instead of selling her original illustrations, Hollie found a way around the problem and began transforming her artwork into Giclée prints, a high quality printing process that produces digital reproductions which last longer than those produced using traditional printing techniques. However, the illustrator wanted her prints to have some of the individuality of her original artwork, so she began embellishing each print with stitch, decorative papers and fabrics. "My original artwork is created with a mixture of traditional methods including hand-painted backgrounds overlaid with silk-screen printing and finished with hand-stitch and collage," she says. "I wanted the prints to have some of the hand-finished qualities found in my original artwork."

Dreamlike colours, quirky depictions and decorative flora and fauna are themes running throughout Hollie's work, and her inspirations come not only from the countryside surrounding her home but also the people she meets. "My work is heavily influenced by every day life and my surroundings," she says. "My latest collection, titled 'English Garden' is inspired by pretty English gardens, lazy summer days and traditional pastimes. I'm also influenced by the people around me – one of my favourite pastimes is people-watching. The 'Betty Loves Tea' collection explores the quirky habits and hobbies of the elderly and features the three most important subject matters: tea; knitting and cats!"

Hollie has shown her work at several trade shows and art fairs and in 2008 was a 'Creative Leicestershire' bursary winner, which helped her launch her first collection of prints at The British Craft Trade Fair 2009. Later that year, Hollie became a Princes Trust supported business and received funding for her website. Exhibiting at last year's Great Northern Contemporary Craft Fair was another proud moment for the

READER OFFER!

Concept For Living is delighted to offer our readers 15% off all full price prints purchased at www.holliebrown.co.uk. To take advantage of this fabulous offer, simply visit the website, choose your favourite print and make sure to quote 'concept offer' when contacting Hollie on tel. 07970 294014 or email: studio holliebrown.co.uk.



Sunny Day

"THE 'BETTY LOVES TEA' COLLECTION EXPLORES THE QUIRKY HABITS AND HOBBIES OF THE ELDERLY AND FEATURES THE THREE MOST IMPORTANT SUBJECT MATTERS, TEA, KNITTING AND CATS!"

illustrator. "As I walked around the show I realised I was now taking part in an event with many of the designers and artists I had admired and studied whilst at university," she says. "I suddenly felt a great sense of achievement."

Despite all her success so far, Hollie's ambitions remain simple. "My main aim within my work is just to make people smile. I would love my work to provoke a warm feeling or sense of nostalgia – or even just a little chuckle."

So what's next for this brilliant illustrator? "Next year I'll be launching an exciting new line of products," says Hollie. "I plan to design, manufacture and distribute them myself – so watch this space!" ■

Hollie is exhibiting again at this year's Great Northern Contemporary Craft Fair, from 21-24 Oct at Spinningfields, Manchester. Visit: www.greatnorthernevents.co.uk for further information.

Other events where you can see Hollie's work are:
Hargraves Art and Craft Fair, Blaby and District Social Centre in Blaby, 6 Nov. www.hargravesfairs.blogspot.com
Christmas Arts & Food Market, Harley Gallery in Worksop, 27-28 Nov. www.harleygallery.co.uk
Hollie recently designed a collection of six greetings cards for The Art Group London, which are available to purchase through her website.