

# A natural art

ROBERT LAMB

Jackie Garner's studio looks out from high above the grounds of Nature In Art which, at Twigworth, outside Gloucester, has a growing reputation as the world's first museum dedicated exclusively to fine, decorative and

applied art inspired by nature. Jackie's own reputation is riding high these days as a remarkable artist for whom nature has been a passion since childhood. Although she never stops exploring new subjects, even while





Left, a rockhopper penguin 'captured' on canvas. Above, Jackie wrapped up warm in the Falklands, a far cry from the exhibitions back in England.

training at Medway College Of Design in the mid-eighties she devoted her spare time to drawing and painting the flora and fauna she had grown up with in the Cotswold countryside. However, it was hearing about a course in natural history education at the Royal College Of Art that made her realise that a career painting wildlife was a possibility.

Nature's designs – camouflage and repeating shapes/patterns between wildlife and habitat – have a fascination for her. She works long hours in the field; her inspiration is taken from nature seen and felt and this gives her work a freshness and vitality that makes the difference between fine painting and illustration. Of course, it is only a painstaking attention to detail

(her many sketchbooks are an education and a delight in themselves) that enables her to portray nature as it acts and reacts around us and with us.

Jackie is happy making art and bird watching on the Severn side area where she lives but she does admit to a strong feeling for the remoter places and plans to visit both Poles as soon as she can. An extended trip to the Falklands in 2005 produced an exciting body of work in watercolour, acrylic and oil which was exhibited last year in Falkland House, Westminster. Although she has taken part in many top international exhibitions, her first solo show was at the prestigious Cheng Kim Loke Gallery at Slimbridge WWT in 2006 when her paintings were also selected by the Society Of Wildlife Artists for its

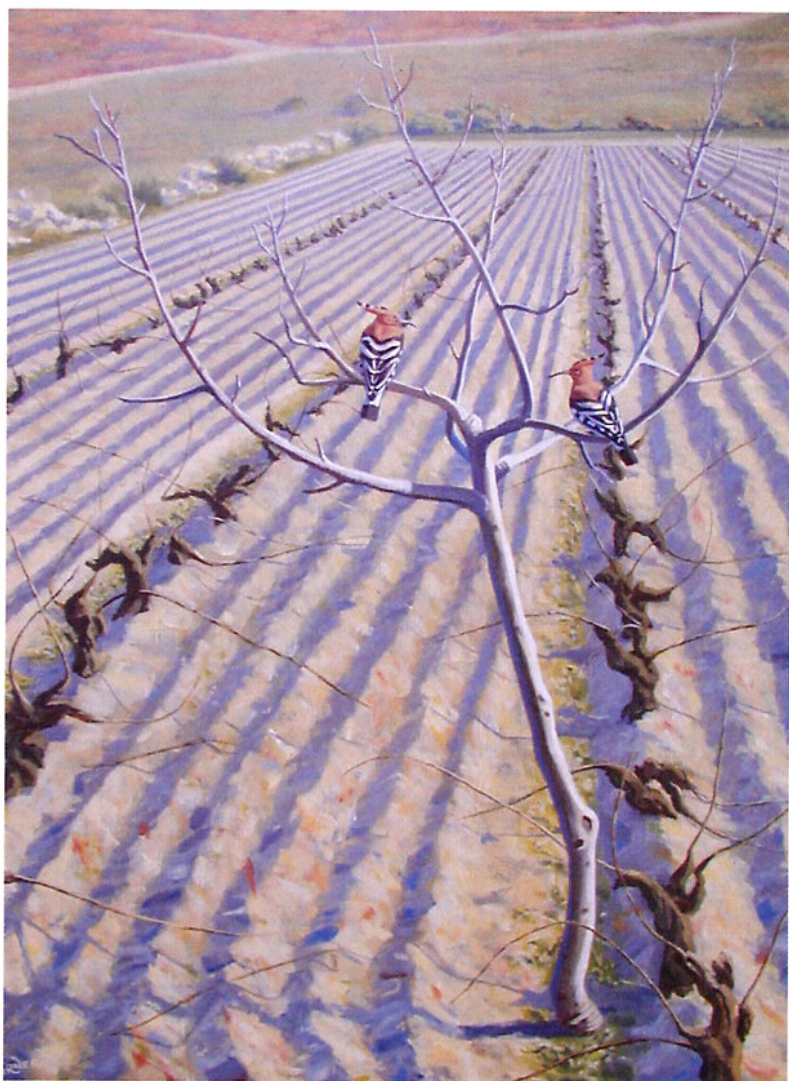


top annual exhibition at the Mall Galleries in London. However, as far back as 1992 she was exhibiting in London at The Society of Botanic Artists, The Royal Miniature Society and The Society of Women Artists.

Although Jackie might feel at home in places that are hard to reach, she makes herself easily accessible as an artist and in her company you can see why she makes a very good education officer and teacher, holding regular classes as well as taking up residences now and then. She has the rare gift amongst painters – not a wordy lot as a rule – of being able to talk about what she does in a friendly, unpatronising way. Her next main artist in residence date at Wallsworth Hall is in 2009 and also next year, besides another show at Slimbridge, she is currently arranging

to have an exhibition (July and August) at the Bloomsbury Academy, London.

I have mentioned this far-ahead date because it stems from a project which Jackie is immersed in right now. Along with Ornitho-Egyptologist (a rare bird indeed!) John Wyatt, she is identifying and illustrating wildlife species depicted in ancient Egyptian art. She finds this engrossing both as artist and naturalist and says it will give her opportunities to indulge her enjoyment of observational drawing whilst allowing scope for an even wider creativity. This November she and John will start their work in Egypt with an explorative visit and we will be able to share the results of their ground breaking labours in a book. Before then her work is flourishing in many directions



as her reputation will do for, it's quite certain, many years to come. ■

*You can see more of Jackie's work at her website: [www.jackiegarner.co.uk](http://www.jackiegarner.co.uk)*

Opposite: a series of studies of the great grey shrike.

This page, garner hoopoes rest above a ploughed field.