



## Career Connection

Photo Credit: Karly Green - BCG Photography

### Marla's Palette - Freelance Fine Art Illustration

I was born and raised near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania along with 6 brothers and sisters. My father advised me never to trace anything so my freehand drawing skills would continue to improve. He died when I was 8, and my mother raised us herself, with the help of so many caring friends, family and neighbors. My mother was my biggest fan growing up; she permitted me to draw scenes on our white doors at home, as well as decorating my bedroom in my favorite fall colors of brown, orange and yellow, encouraging my creativity.

Throughout grade school I was lucky to have art and music class each day; it was part of the curriculum back then, not like today where so many art programs have been cut. As a teenager I also attended Saturday morning art classes at Carnegie Museum in Oakland, Pa. In high school I enrolled in the Vocational/Technical program where I studied Commercial Art for 3 hours each school day.

I went on to study Visual Arts at the Art Institute of Pittsburgh where I made the Dean's List all 8 quarters and was fortunate to travel to Europe on a Study Tour for 2 months. We visited London, Paris, and Rome and enjoyed a month in Florence, Italy. We visited many museums and cathedrals and attended lectures.

I always wanted to be an artist and would draw all the time at a very young age. I sat in our yard and drew the old barn across the street many times. My neighbors had a horse farm, so I was always drawing horses too. At 13, I became interested in sports and would draw my idol, Roberto Clemente, over and over. There was never a "light bulb" moment...being an artist was always my focus and goal professionally. I'm always puzzled when people (who haven't seen me in awhile) ask me if I'm still doing my art. I've been doing it all my life, why would I do anything else? With so many friends talking retirement, I've never given it much thought. If I'm lucky I'll die at my drawing board!

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I've enjoyed working at home for 35 years, and would have a hard time thinking of any Creative Directors I didn't enjoy working with. The projects are always interesting and challenging. I've illustrated everything from McDonald's hamburgers to the Chicago Theatre to a frog on a tricycle. Even marketing and promotion is fun, and it's always exciting to work with a new client. It can be stressful getting through the slow economic times and the recession, but I usually come out of it with new clients and markets for my work.

If I could meet one important figure in my life would have to be my Dad; he's been gone for so long, there is much to catch up on. I'd like for him to know that I followed his advice and it served me well. Professionally, I'd love to chat with Norman Rockwell. He had the life artists dream of - living in the beautiful countryside in an all-American town with townspeople he could use as models, a large studio to paint in and clients that showcased his artwork nationally. It was a great time for illustrators, before photography and the computer came to be. I also admire artist James Bama. His realistic paintings of the current west with studies of modern day cowboys and Indians are breathtaking. He also used models from the towns around him in the Yellowstone Valley and would have great stories to tell.

Aside from doing commercial artwork for products such as pewter ornaments, coloring books, greeting cards, posters, wine labels, etc., I also illustrate Chicago landmarks in a holiday setting and sell prints of them in shops in the Chicago area. In Geneva, the Strawflower Shop has been selling my prints for 10 years. I am looking forward to celebrating this anniversary this coming holiday season, where I will appear with my artwork during "Meet the Artist" days in November and December. I

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completed an illustration of a sun that was recently shown on the "CBS Sunday Morning with Charles Osgood" show. The show's symbol is a sun, and they use images of the sun when going out of a segment to a commercial.