

# Hillary Parker

by Kathi Williams



Photo by Bobby Haven

The sweeping marsh views, seascapes, and panoramic vistas of coastal Georgia that can be found throughout the local galleries and shops are not the works that come from St. Simons resident Hillary Parker's brushes. While this outdoor world definitely inspires and excites her as a naturalist, the world she captures with her pencils, brushes and pens is within the tiny microcosms of this bigger picture. Hillary is an award winning Botanical Watercolor Artist whose paintings are exhibited and sold worldwide.

From the grasses woven together to form a nest to the tendrils of moss on the bark of a tree, Hillary's creations are extraordinarily focused, capturing minute details of plants, flowers, feathers, and other objects that can be found in nature. Hillary says, "Although I am primarily a Botanical Artist, I am also drawn to the simple beauty of the more commonly overlooked subjects in nature."

People have described her work as striving for "perfection"; but she shudders, and says, "Don't even use that word! I'm not trying to be perfect! Perfection is boring -- it's the imperfections that make things interesting!" She thinks that is true both in nature and in life, preferring to

paint specimens that are in beginning or end stages of their lives, or plants known for carnivorous tendencies rather than their beauty.

What Hillary truly loves is teaching. She said she always knew she wanted to be a teacher, despite the fact that she wasn't a very good student. While Hillary enjoyed art, she didn't set out to be an artist, because her father told her that wasn't a real job. When she combined her passion for art with her desire to educate, Hillary found her calling. She attained a B.S. in Art Education from Florida International University and has been teaching

classes and workshops for 19 years. Her workshops at Anderson Fine Art Gallery on St. Simons Island are very popular. She is excited to now be opening her St. Simons studio to offer private art classes for adults seeking to learn how to draw or paint with watercolors in one on one classes. She welcomes students of all experience levels.


Hillary's gift is her ability to teach adults and children alike to find a way to access their creative center, to "enter their right brain," as she describes it. In her classroom, Hillary provides an atmosphere that engages all the senses so that people can use whatever technique they find successful to get to that creative place. For example, if you are there to draw apples, you can bet there will be a bushel of them present, so you can smell them and hear the crispness as you bite into one, while you taste the tang of juice on your tongue. Capturing the essence and spirit of the apple is Hillary's focus. Often her subjects are more complex, like the feathers of all varieties that are currently flying out of her studio. Of these more detailed works, Hillary says, "I love the technical challenges of a complex composition while revealing the voice of each object's unique and lively character."

Although Hillary spends much time engaging her right brain, her left brain is also hard at work researching the subjects she paints. The genre of botanical art is a science in itself. It is highly structured, requires precise measurements, and very strict attention to detail. Hillary researches not only the plant itself, but the pollination process, the lifespan and cycles. She finds that the ability to focus on minute details is a way to harness her energy and direct it in one spot. Hillary can disappear for days into the studio and enjoys the quiet time and solitude of being absorbed in a

project. On the other hand, she also enjoys St. Simons Island as a great place to get out when she feels like having "social time."

The next few months are busy ones for Hillary. She will be painting in one of the gardens during the Cassina Garden Club Tabby & Tillandsia Garden Walk on May 3-4. She will be at GJ Ford Bookshop in The Shops at Sea Island from 1-3:00 p.m. on May 10, signed copies of "Today's Botanical Artist", in which she is featured. On May 15-16, she will be at the Atlanta Botanical Garden teaching a 2-day workshop called "Botanical Watercolor Basics . . . And Beyond." On August 4-8, she will teach "Watercolor Basics: Exploring Nature's Details" at Anderson Fine Art. In September, she'll be teaching at the Phipps

Conservatory in Pittsburgh and the following month will find her in California, teaching a workshop at the annual conference of the American Society of Botanical Artists.

In her "spare time", Hillary will be learning about orchids for a solo exhibit of these flowers that she will premiere at the Atlanta Botanical Garden in January 2009. Hopefully, she'll be able to squeeze in a little time to go to the beach with her husband and two teenage sons this summer! If you are interested in seeing Hillary's work or learning from this talented lady, stop by Anderson Fine Art Gallery or go to Hillary's website at [www.hillaryparkerwatercolors.com](http://www.hillaryparkerwatercolors.com). You won't be disappointed! 



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