

# Myrlah Olson



Four Trees

## THE GALLERY

The purpose of the Stillwater Public Library Gallery is to provide education through exhibits and displays; to increase community involvement in the library; and to provide an enjoyable environment for the library's users.

For more information about the gallery, contact Lynne Bertalmio, Director,  
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224 Third St. N.  
Stillwater, MN 55082

[www.stillwaterlibrary.org](http://www.stillwaterlibrary.org)

# Cabinet of Curiosities

November-December 2015

**Artist Reception:** Saturday, December 12, 2-4 pm

Stillwater Public Library Gallery

224 Third Street No.

Stillwater, MN 55082

## Artist Statement

My studio is a small room with the usual artist paraphernalia but also a dusty mess of vases with dried plants, animal bones, bird eggshells, and stones. It is my expression of the cabinets of curiosities, created by the wealthy prior to the scientific revolution that were the first step in categorizing and understanding the natural world. It also reaches back to the early human activity of collecting non utilitarian objects (pretty or interesting collections of things that couldn't have gotten to an archeological site naturally) which could be evidence of humanity's first foray into art or a demonstration of lifelong curiosity which separates humans from other animals.

I've painted since I was young and have benefited from some excellent teachers but have made my living in other ways.

Watercolor is my usual medium of choice. I appreciate its luminosity, the science of it that when learned can make it more predictable, the occasional serendipity of a wash breaking in an unexpected but perfect way, and its difficulty. Watercolor is a high wire act. A single mistake- working too wet, mixing the wrong colors, a single errant brushstroke-can irredeemably ruin a painting. Perversely, that's what I love about it.

I learned the traditional technique for creating botanical art at the Como Conservatory Botanical Art and Illustration program; a program sadly no longer in existence, but I don't consider myself a botanical artist. When choosing between the strictly accurate representation which botanical illustration requires and an approach I think is more interesting, accuracy loses. But I do appreciate the process that allows me to learn everything I can about the subject before I put brush to paper.

I choose subjects that interest me. They are rarely pretty or perfect. Like people, those with a few flaws are more intriguing. Most of the subjects I paint, I've come upon while walking or are from my garden. I prefer to paint from life. I use photographs when there isn't another option but think the painting suffers as a result.

I do use media other than watercolor. I'm especially drawn to those that come with an interesting historical backstory like silverpoint, gold leaf, and vellum.

Painting is the way I seek to understand the natural world which is endlessly odd and curious to me.

*There is no science without fancy and no art without facts.* Vladimir Nabokov

**Please contact the artist directly  
with questions or to purchase art:**

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