



## TRICIA OKTOBER

Artist Tricia Oktober's menagerie and rare plant garden in the Blue Mountains provide an endless cavalcade of characters and settings for her much loved collection of illustrated children's stories.

Over twenty Tricia Oktober titles have been published to date with recent additions *Blue Moon*, *Butterfly* and *Oscar* (two of her family of pugs and dachshunds) and *Bilby*. Her first published children's book was *Bush Party*, still hugely popular and widely available, if not in bookshops then readily on eBay. Tricia has been awarded a lifetime achievement award by the Wilderness Society as well as many other awards; she has been the subject of innumerable articles and even of a Canadian



documentary film. After perfecting her knowledge of French as a young woman living in Europe, she travelled to Quebec and remained in Canada for many years until, she relates, a friend sent her some gumleaves in a letter. The smell and the memories enticed her return home.

Those who have known for years this tall slim woman with the long skinny pigtail going right down her back past her waist say that she never seems to change. Her love of all wildlife, animals and plants, is legendary and a visit to her infrequently opened rare plant garden (and



then it is usually to benefit a charity) is described almost as though it is a pilgrimage. She teaches drawing to just a few people and gardens for a very select clientele, turning their dreams into arbours and havens. Tricia's old-fashioned and beautifully restored Mountains home with corridors and coloured windowpanes is filled with treasures and painted woodwork. There is a kitchen that looks like Carl Larsson's, with its wood stove, comfortable chairs and colourful china and kitchen utensils—and of course always full of life with Tricia's numerous dogs. The garden which is packed so closely with every variety of

plant capable of growing in this cool climate extends from the street where massed succulents crowd around the steps at the front and then tumbles down a steep hillside of terraces and paths.

Tricia loves the bush and the flora and fauna which were always part of her free and happy childhood, growing up on the eastern coast of New South Wales, with its rainforests and beaches. She has always drawn and never had formal training, remarkable in an artist whose works are frequently featured in high profile exhibitions

Tricia Oktober's illustrations  
from *Blue Moon*



of botanical art. She loves the works of the Surrealists, particularly the women—Leonore Fini, Eleanor Carrington and Georgia O'Keefe—and some of her own most memorable works have a Surrealist style.

Tricia draws, makes linocuts and etchings and works in oils and watercolour. She has no use for computers and says she uses her eyes to observe and then her hands and her determination to create the work, keeping at it until she is satisfied, although she says she seldom feels satisfied. It should be added that she also uses her vivid imagination and a great sense of humour and fun which is particularly evident in her recent children's books. These books are perfect stories to be read to

very young children with illustrations that provide an endless source of excitement and discovery with jokes and allusions. In *Blue Moon*, Cat kneads and treads, weaving a dream mat. All cats make them, says Tricia, to sleep on and to dream and each blue moon, cats come together in a fabulous dream that lasts until dawn. In *Blue Moon* there is a tiny meercat who has found himself lost in Cat's dream and is always there on every page, waiting for the dream to end so that he can go home.

Tricia Oktober's recent titles are available through bookshops and Ford St Publishing [www.fordstreetpublishing.com](http://www.fordstreetpublishing.com)