

The illustrations in “Home” were made using a combination of media.

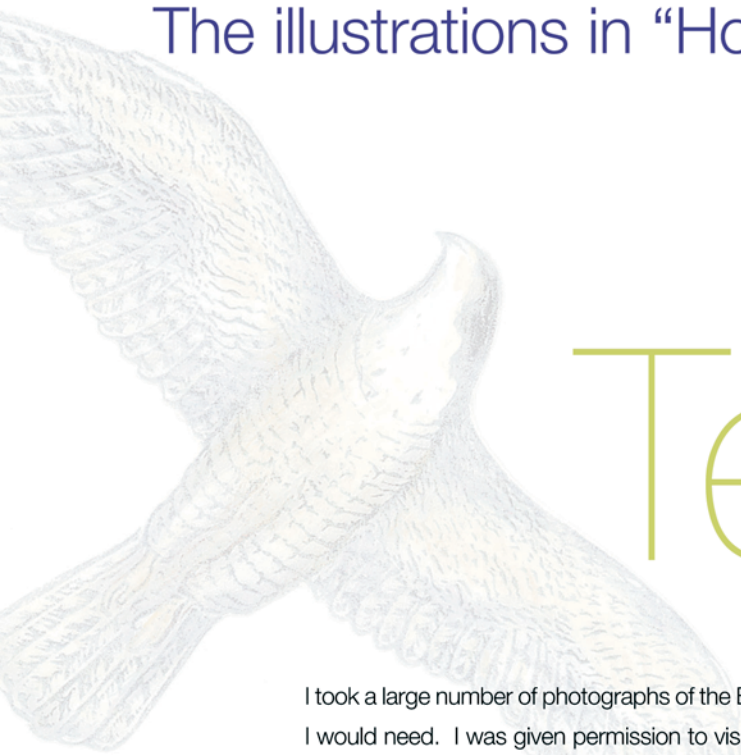


illustration Techniques

illustration

I took a large number of photographs of the Brisbane city features I would need. I was given permission to visit the real nest site of the peregrine falcons on the 27th floor of the Admiralty Towers 1 building, beside the river. I took many photos up there and from up there. I even lay on the stones on the balcony with my camera so I could get the right perspective for my last illustration in which the female falcon is sitting in the stones with her first egg.

These photos were used as backgrounds for the illustrations. With the assistance of a computer-whizz artist friend – Teresa Jordan – I manipulated the images to accentuate colours and shapes. These images were printed out and I added coloured pencil, watercolour paint and pastel by hand.

The images of the falcons were completed as linocut rubbings. To do these, I drew the falcons first, transferred the drawings onto lino and then cut them out using linocutting tools. Instead of rolling ink on the linocut block and printing it like a stamp as is usual, I put the linocut block under a sheet of thin paper and rubbed a coloured pencil over the top – just like a coin rubbing. This achieves a softer effect than linoprinting but you still get the same interesting feather patterns. I thought the softness would contrast more effectively with the stark lines, patterns and geometric shapes of the cityscapes.

The falcon linocut rubbings on the thin paper were cut out by hand with tiny nail scissors and collaged to the hand-coloured photographic backgrounds. Then more pastel was added to the final collaged image to unite the elements.



inspiration

inspiration for "Home"

Late 2004, Brisbane City Council Libraries issued me with a challenge (and a potential commission!): to write and illustrate a children's picture book which captured the city of Brisbane and which could also be interpreted into the new Children's area in the Brisbane Square library.

By co-incidence, I had already been toying with the idea of writing and illustrating a picture book based on the peregrine falcons, Frodo and Frieda, who had taken up residence on a high-rise building in inner-city Brisbane. I have always enjoyed books and poems written about human activities from an animal's or alien's perspective.

Over several years, I had read newspaper articles about Frodo and Frieda and, through webcam technology, had observed their antics on a website. One article described how the falcons usually nest on cliff faces in the wild, and so they often choose to nest on high-rise buildings which mimic cliff faces if they come to live in the city. That got me thinking about how the falcons would

perceive all the features of a big city, such as Brisbane, – its cars, people, hot air balloons, rowboats, to name a few – if they had never seen those things before, and had only lived in the bush. And so the idea for Home was born.

Home is my third picture book where I have used a bird of prey as the main character. I love to illustrate birds because, using my favoured linocut print medium, they make great subjects with their strong beak shapes and interesting feather patterns. They also make a versatile and useful main character for a picture book because they can move around so quickly – suddenly very high, so you can show an interesting aerial view, and then they can be low zooming through trees so you can show these perspectives as well. The peregrine falcon, being the fastest bird in the world, and sporting very handsome feather patterns, was an irresistible subject for a picture book and one which allowed me to tell a story about my own landscape of inner-city Brisbane.

I hope that readers of "Home" will never look at the Brisbane cityscapes in quite the same way again!

