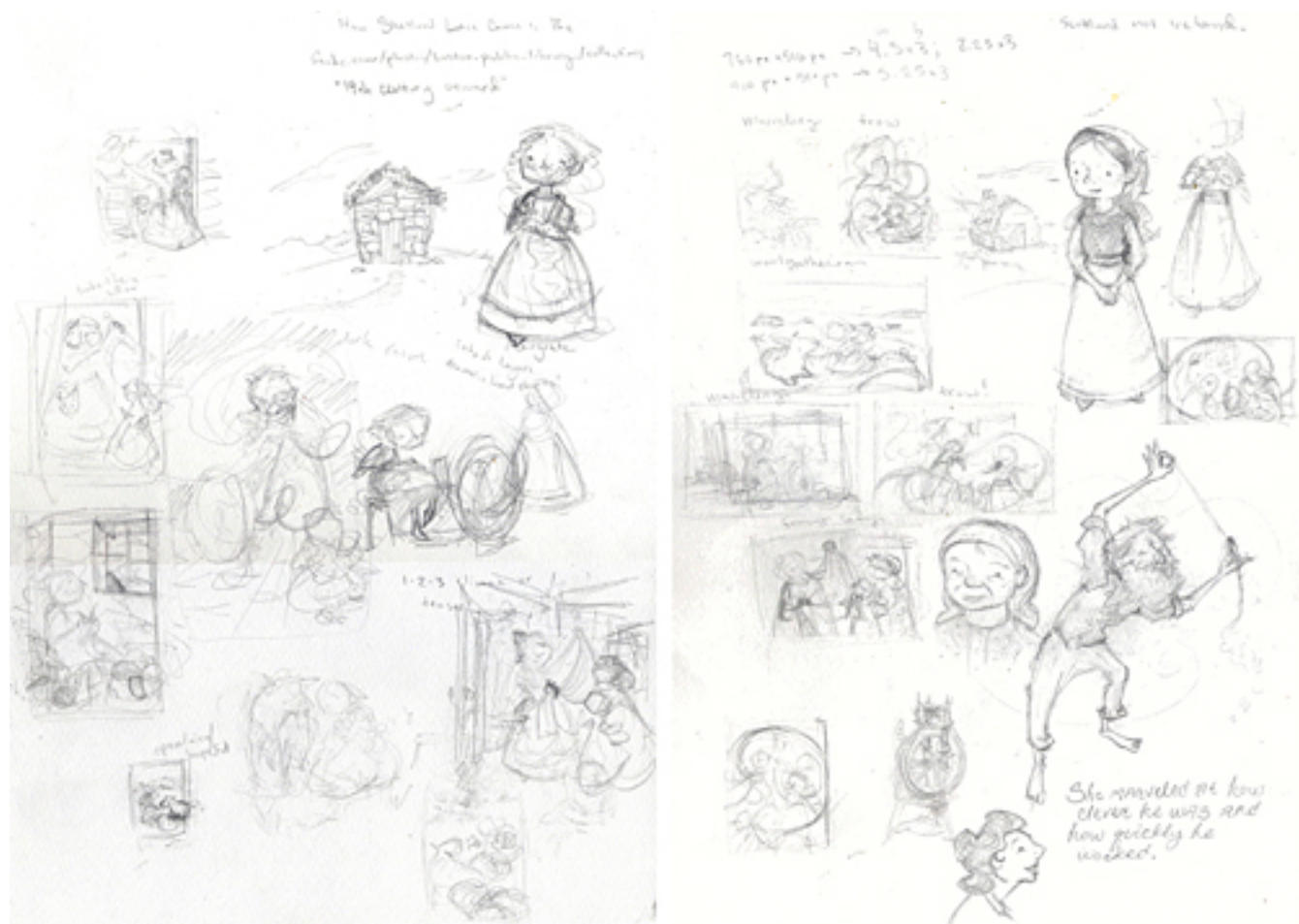




Eloise Narrigan created the stunning illustrations for [The Little Spinner and the Spider](#) as well as [Critter Comforts](#). In today's post she gives us a behind the scenes look at the process for [The Little Spinner and the Spider](#). You can find more of Eloise's work at [www.eloisedraws.etsy.com](http://www.eloisedraws.etsy.com).

Besides being a near-constant knitter and having recently started working at an LYS in my neighborhood (stop by JP Knit & Stitch and say hi if you're in Boston!), I am a freelance illustrator and textile designer. I'm always looking for ways to combine the illustrating and designing with the knitting, so when Kate emailed me about a possible story for Twist Collective, I was delighted.

This isn't my first job for Twist, but with three more years of experience, I felt much more comfortable telling Mairgrette's story than I had working on Critter Comforts. My style is a bit looser, my brushstrokes are more confident, and I even got to do some historical research!



I did these sketches while waiting for some books at the Boston Public Library. While the internet--particularly Google's image search--is a great tool, sometimes you just can't beat a book. The ones I found, including Pam Dawson's *Traditional Island Knitting* and Lucinda Guy's more recent *Northern Knits* provided me with context and inspiration.

In these sketches, you can see a couple versions of Mairgrete as well as the Trow, plus Mairgrete's mother and the wealthy woman from Lerwick who didn't make it into any final illustrations. You can also see, maybe, some small seeds of ideas in the form of thumbnails. Occasionally I'll look back through old sketchbooks and be temporarily baffled by what all those little squiggles could mean.

I'm also experimenting a bit with the text on this page. The lettering, which I did separate from the paintings, wound up taking the longest time! I had to pay careful attention while penciling out the words, then again while painting them in opaque watercolor, since I was fighting against a lot of my natural handwriting habits. For instance: my r's look like c's, and the dots on my i's tend to wander away to join other words. I still did a lot of cleaning up in Photoshop, but I think the effect was worth the extra time.

1a



*Thus, she would sit in her little chair by the window and spin or knit.*

1b



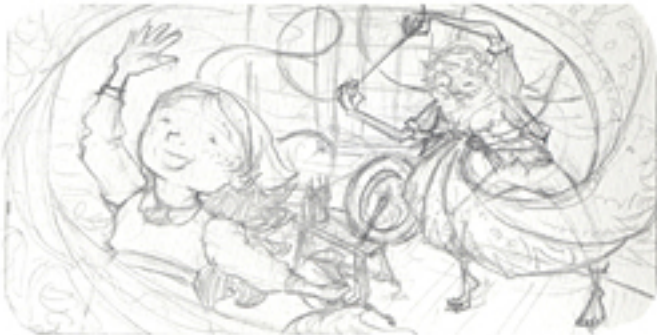
*Maryate would sit in her little chair by the window and spin or knit.*

2b



*"Watch me, Maryate, and I shall teach you to spin and knit more beautifully than you ever thought possible."*

2a



*"Watch me, Maryate, and I shall teach you to spin and knit more beautifully than you ever thought possible."*

3b



*The next morning Maryate pulled the whitest wool from the jundies and set to work.*

3a



*There on the threshold stood a beautiful lady dressed in the finest silks and satins.*

I gathered my notes, books, rough sketches, and--of course--Daryl's story and sketched some more legible thumbnails. You can probably tell which ones Kate approved. I can't help but agree; while I like the scene with the woman from Lerwick, it's a less satisfying conclusion than Mairgrete with her sheep in the Shetland countryside.



With the approved sketches, I made quick color studies in Photoshop. Although I don't slavishly follow these while painting (maybe you can tell!), it helps me think about what I want to communicate. In this case, the scene starts cold and a bit lonely (blue), warms up with excitement and magic (a nice, mystical purple) and then stays warm but returns to nature (green). Doing a digital color study lets me experiment, too, and chose wild colors that I'd be too timid to try on a final painting.

I don't have any photos of the paintings in process, and of course you know where to find the final versions of the [paintings](#), but I do have one more peek at my process.



This is what my working space looks like at this very moment. I have a piece of watercolor paper stapled to a piece of Masonite (to keep the paper from warping), and there are two different drawings on it, ready to be painted. Above my desk are some important tools (more brushes, ink, tape, and, yes, that's a roll of toilet paper) and inspirational images and objects, including a bowl my aunt made.

And right on the shelf you can see one of the completed paintings I've been going on about, with the other two behind it. Those paintings, along with a menagerie of cards, posters, and notebooks, are available in my etsy shop ([www.eloisedraws.etsy.com](http://www.eloisedraws.etsy.com)). If you'd like to help keep me in fabric, fiber, and paint (and get a little something for yourself or someone else), consider dropping by.

I hope this was an interesting and informative look at my process. Thanks for reading, and happy knitting!