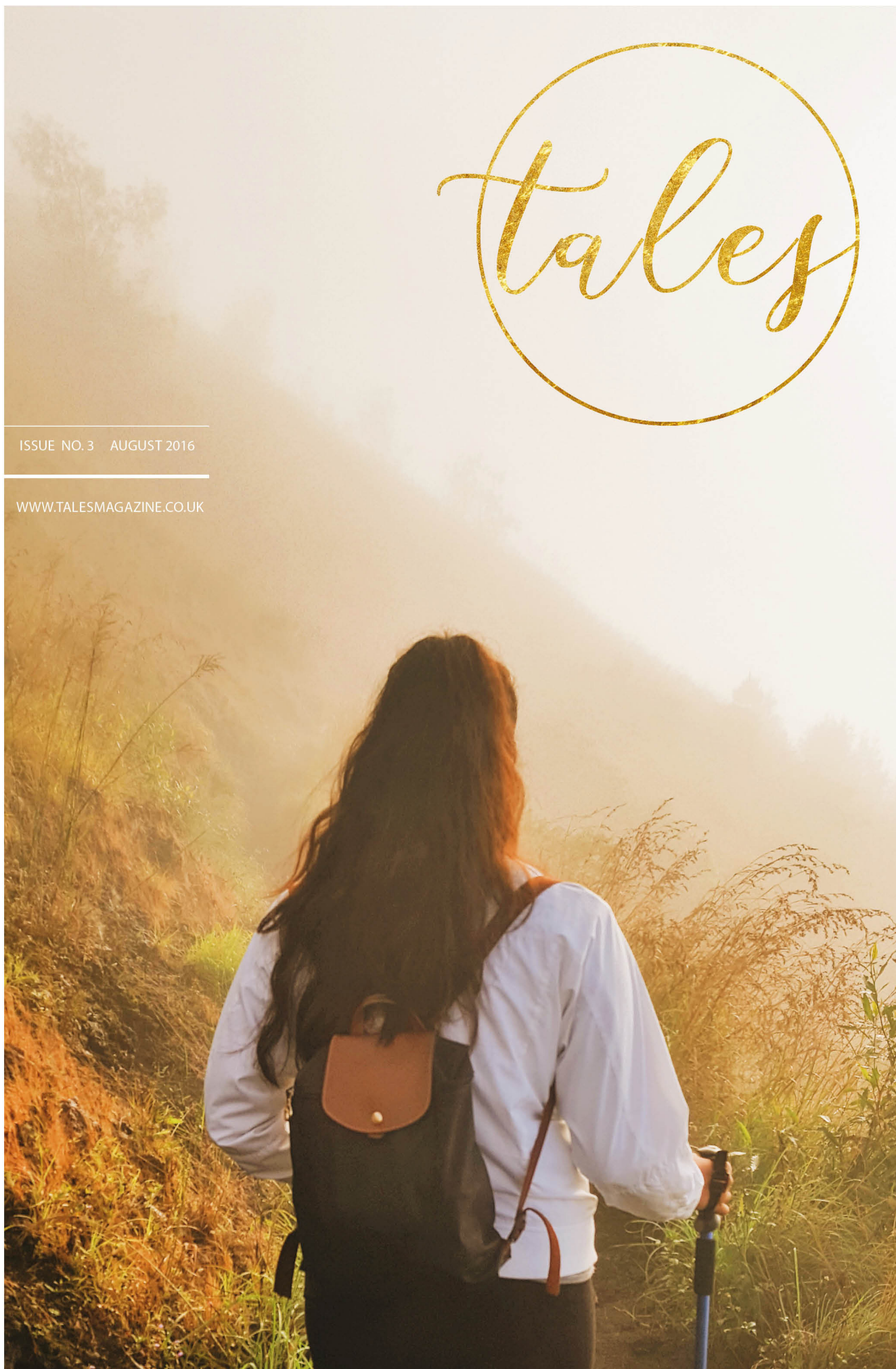


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carin gerard

Nature, SO LITTLE IN LIFE IS PERMANENT, and the fleeting resplendence of a butterfly, the sky or a flower punctuate this certainty. All gracefully changing in an instance, the twists and turns of wings, clouds and petals tell a story with every passing moment. Each of these natural phenomena give Carin Gerard, Santa Barbara-based classical realism artist, an opportunity to exaggerate nature's robust, yet impermanent brilliance. "Nature" is a series of gicleés that relies on realistic and fantastical colors to portray the vibrancy of each subject. Gerard's Butterflies collection captures both the impressive potency of a rainbow array of colors, as well as the soft, fluttering fragility of each sublime species. "To me, butterflies represent hope and new life, yet the fragility and shortness of that life is profound. Trying to express this unique, transient beauty was a welcome challenge." Similarly, Gerard's latest collection, Sky and Clouds, captures a moment in time through another unbelievably striking presentation of nature. Palpable clouds part in the sky to create striking shapes and colors far beyond blue and white. "The mood a sky can convey is as interesting to me as capturing a fleeting image. The process was liberating and freeing because everything literally changes in mere seconds," she states. In Gerard's Inner Beauty collection, petals seemingly swim or dance, effortlessly moving the viewers' eyes from one detail to the next. "My goal here was to portray a novel level of dynamism, excitement and lusciousness to a still-life flower."

A quality that is ever-present in Gerard's paintings is sensuality; they are feminine, sexy and powerful. She believes the natural entities presented in the three collections—these essences of life—are formidable. Gerard's



Carin Gerard
- PAINTER

www.caringerard.com
Instagram: [carin_gerard_art](https://www.instagram.com/carin_gerard_art)

Holly Richmond, PhD
- WRITER
www.drhollyrichmond.com

Jessica Dalene
- PHOTOGRAPHER
www.jessicadalene.com
Instagram: [@frankenjess](https://www.instagram.com/frankenjess)
Facebook: Jessica Dalene Weber



objective with this series was to capture nature's inner beauty while portraying a fleeting moment. The subjects are symbolic in many ways, capturing the spirit of the passage of time. She explains, "They are living, dying or changing in the same breath, and hold beauty at every stage." Using her decades of classical realism training in Florence, Italy, the first layer, imprimatura, is applied as a neutral grey. The true references of these elements are then drawn on using a grisaille technique, from the French word gris, to create a sculptural quality. This artistic style imparts a relief affect that makes each stroke on the canvas feel tangible. The limited background palette is serene, calming and creates continuity, as the interpolation of Gerard's distinct colors deliver artful originality. "I added color with great discretion," she notes. The paintings' color values are limited in order to eliminate any semblance of conspicuous contrast. Each subject's balanced and tranquil character is retained. Perhaps more than with any other series, "Nature" showcases Gerard's technical prowess. Using the Munsell color theory, she works from an equation for each color to create a string of values. "It's like math," Gerard states. "The process is complex, but in order for a painting to be complete, there must be a looseness, an informality amongst the precision." To that point, she is not interested in presenting a viewer with a static image, lovely as it may be. Gerard's work is dynamic, three-dimensional and interpretive. Her hope is viewers find the story beyond the external paint strokes, discovering instead the everlasting quality of nature's innermost beauty.





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