



# *Dancing Princesses:*

The Fairy Tale Art of Ruth Sanderson

Ruth Sanderson ©1990



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## The Fairy Tale Art of Ruth Sanderson

A renowned fantasy artist and illustrator of children's literature, Ruth Sanderson has created imagery for more than seventy-five picture books, many of which bring classic and original fairy tales to life, including *The Twelve Dancing Princesses*; *Cinderella*; *The Golden Mare*, *The Firebird*, and *the Magic Ring*; *The Snow Princess*, and *The Enchanted Wood*.

Fairy tales take place “once upon a time,” in lands full of magic, quests, princesses and princes, wise women and hermits, commoners and kings, fairies, talking animals, and magical forests. These stories, or folk tales, were first handed down by word of mouth, long before books were printed. For past generations, fairy tales were the entertainment of the times, and they continue to entertain us today. In fact, new stories are still being written, and they continue to bring us to magical places where anything might happen.

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## *Worn Out Shoes*

Each night, the twelve princesses put on new dancing shoes, and travel down a secret staircase, through three magical woods where the leaves sparkle with gold, silver, and diamonds. Then, they row across a lake in elegant swan boats to a magnificent palace, where they dance the night away. By evening's end, they have danced so much that their once-new shoes are almost in tatters!

**Tattered Shoes** 1990

Illustration for *The Twelve Dancing Princesses* by Ruth Sanderson  
Oil on canvas

### *Draw*

Their shoes are in tatters! Design some new dancing shoes for the twelve dancing princesses.







Cinderella's Rags Were Transformed 2002  
Illustration for *Cinderella* by Ruth Sanderson  
Oil on canvas

## *What To Wear? Fairy Tale Attire*

**L**ong ago, men wore clothing that looked very different from today—from tunics, leggings, elaborate brocade vests and coats, if you were a nobleman, to unusual hats, hoods, caps, and crowns. Look at the elaborate crown worn by the Czar in *The Golden Mare*, *The Firebird*, and *the Magic Ring*. Would all of those jewels have made it heavy to wear?

In historical tales, knights are often pictured wearing elaborate suits of armor, which provided protection in battle. *The Enchanted Wood*, Ruth Sanderson's original

fairy tale, is set during the 15th century, a time when "knights in shining armor" became known for their exciting adventures.

Though fairy tales are make-believe, artists often like to choose a specific period in history in which to set a story. The wide dresses in *Cinderella* were inspired by 18th century French fashion, and the dresses and hats worn in *The Twelve Dancing Princesses* are inspired by a much earlier time, the 15th century, in Germany.





A Clash of Metal Sounded in the Wood 1991  
Illustration for *The Enchanted Wood*  
by Ruth Sanderson  
Oil on canvas



The Tsar Greedily Took the Feather 2001  
Illustration for *The Golden Mare, the Firebird, and the Magic Ring* by Ruth Sanderson  
Oil on canvas

*Draw*

Choose your favorite article of clothing from one of Ruth Sanderson’s artworks and sketch it here, adding new details and decorations to make it your own. Or, design a costume from your own imagination that you might like to wear!





The Great Tree at the Heart of the World 1991  
Illustration for *The Enchanted Wood* by Ruth Sanderson  
Oil on canvas

## *Far Away Places*

**F**or Ruth Sanderson, spending time in the woods has always sparked her imagination. When she decided to write an original fairy tale, she knew she wanted it to take place in the woods, her favorite place to play as a child. The story of *The Enchanted Wood* was

inspired by childhood memories and her continuing love of old trees and the dappled light of the New England woods. *The Enchanted Wood* is the story of the quest for the Heart of the World, a mythical tree at the center of an enchanted forest that is fraught with peril.

### *Imagine*

Close your eyes and imagine a magical a setting for a fairy tale of your own design. What do you see in your mind's eye? Describe it.

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*Draw*

Sketch Your Fairy Tale Setting Here!





# Fabulous Fairies

Oddly enough, fairies are not included in all fairy tales, and when they do appear, they are not always helpful and kind. In *Sleeping Beauty*, for example, the thirteenth fairy bestows a curse on the Queen's child instead of a gift, as the fairies before her had done.

In *The Crystal Mountain*, the Red Fairy is willing to sacrifice herself to help the hero of the story, and is transformed from a fairy into a mortal woman through her good deeds.

The Thirteenth Fairy Stormed In 1986  
Illustration for *The Sleeping Beauty* by Ruth Sanderson.  
Oil on canvas



## Imagine

If you were a fairy, what special powers would you have to change the world? List your unique abilities here:

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### *Draw*

If you could transform yourself into a fairy, what would you look like?  
Would you have wings, and what colors would you wear? Sketch your ideas here.



# Magical Creatures



The Firebird 2001

Illustration for *The Golden Mare, the Firebird, and the Magic Ring* by Ruth Sanderson  
Oil on canvas

Magical creatures appear in many classic fairy tales. Though they often appear as common animals at first, they soon reveal unique characteristics, like having the ability to speak or carry out impossible tasks. In *The Golden Mare, the Firebird, and the Magic Ring*, which is inspired by traditional Russian fairy tales, The Golden Mare is a talking horse that helps Alexi, the story's main character, at every turn. Together they capture the Firebird, a mythical bird that the Czar wishes to display in a gilded cage.

In *The Snow Princess*, the story's female heroine leaves her home in the icy north to see the world, crossing barren deserts of ice and snow with gentle polar bears walking by her side.

## Imagine

What kind of magical animal would you like to meet? Is it the legendary unicorn, a dragon, firebird or phoenix? Or, is it an ordinary animal of your own design that might help you with a difficult task? Describe what makes your animal magical.

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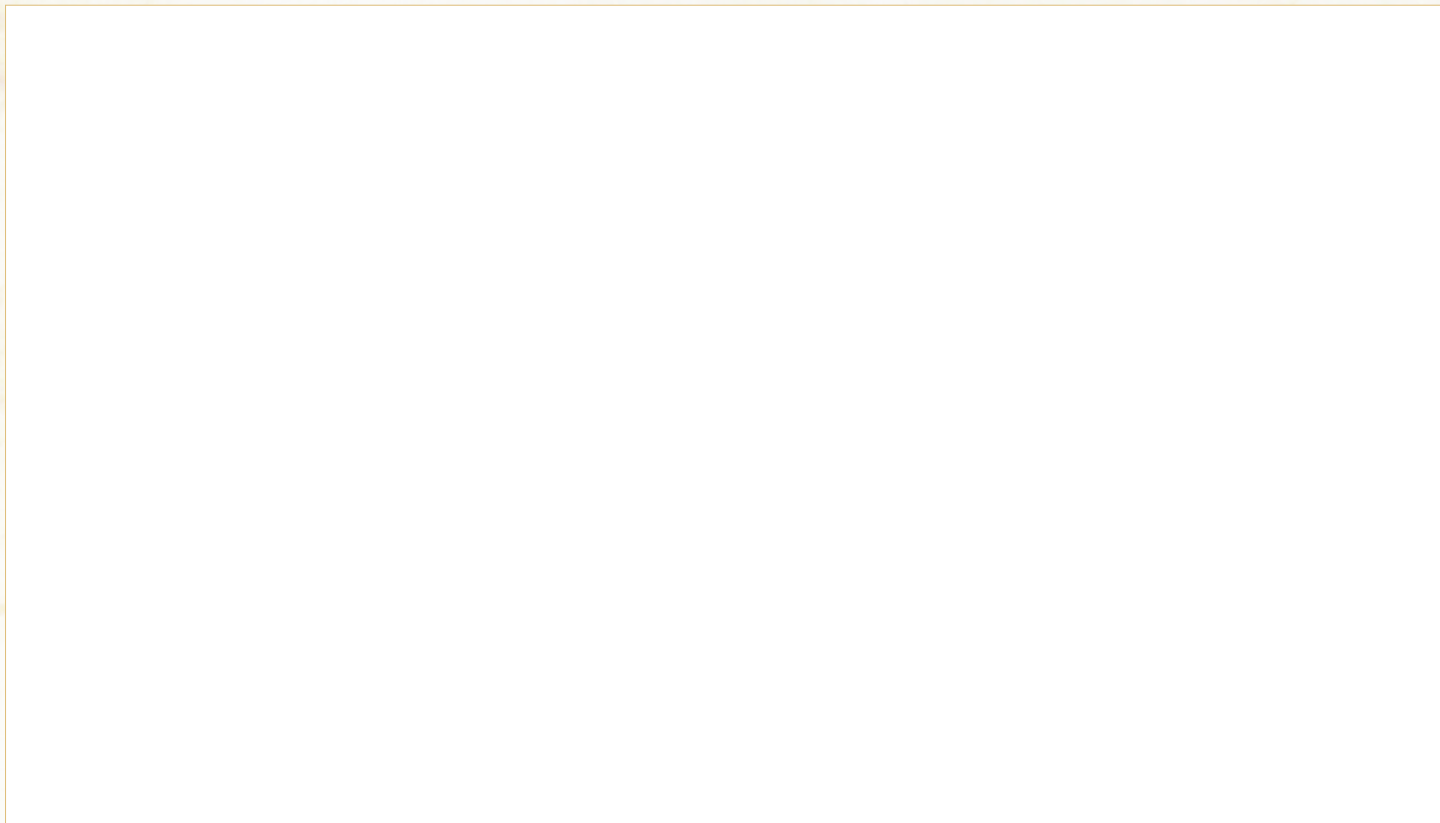




The Snow Princess and the Polar Bear 2004.  
Illustration for *The Snow Princess* by Ruth Sanderson.  
Oil on canvas

*Draw*

Sketch your magical creature here!





# *Magical Things*

**M**agical things in fairy tales come in many shapes and sizes. In *The Crystal Mountain*, fairies steal a huge tapestry because it is so beautiful that they want to make a copy of it. The tapestry later comes to life, turning a grand palace woven from

colored threads into the real thing. A golden ring, the smallest object in *The Golden Mare*, *The Firebird*, and *the Magic Ring*, has the most powerful magic because it can grant wishes.

## *Explore*

Search for other magical things in the paintings on view and name the stories they come from.

A Magic Wand \_\_\_\_\_

A Magic Thread \_\_\_\_\_

A Magic Key \_\_\_\_\_

A Magical Suit of Armor \_\_\_\_\_

Alexi Presented the Ring to the Tsar 2001

Illustration for *The Golden Mare, the Firebird, and the Magic Ring* by Ruth Sanderson  
Oil on canvas







The Tapestry Comes to Life 1999  
Illustration for *The Crystal Mountain* by Ruth Sanderson  
Oil on canvas

### *Imagine*

If you could choose to have something with magical properties, what would that object be, and what powers would it have?

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### *Draw*

Sketch your magical object here!



# *The Power of Three*

*I*n fairytales, things often come in threes – three brothers, three tasks, three wishes, and in the case of *The Golden Mare, the Firebird, and the Magic Ring*, three magical elements. A book's title is very important, because it gives readers a hint about what the story might be about.

*The Golden Mare, the Firebird, and the Magic Ring*, 2001.  
Cover illustration for *The Golden Mare, the Firebird, and the Magic Ring*, by Ruth Sanderson.  
Oil on canvas

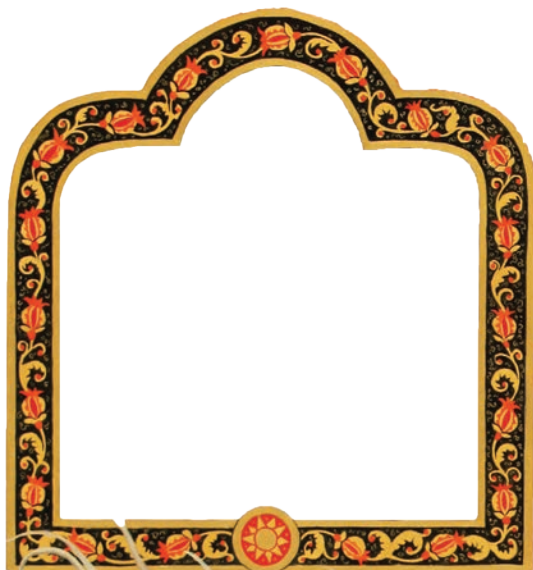


## *Design a Book Cover*

Explore the power of three by creating a book cover of your own design using three of your favorite things. Animals, superheroes, and even toys can be a part of your picture. Ruth Sanderson modeled her Firebird on an old stuffed pheasant in the flying position, but she made his wings and tail more elegant, and painted him with a fiery red glow.

Print your book title in the decorative border and sketch your book cover here!







# Fairy Tale Words

## Match

Match the numbered clues to words from Cinderella (bottom) to complete the puzzle!



**ACROSS**

- Shining lustrously
- Changed appearance
- Continued steadily in action
- Shining brilliantly
- Ornamental needlework
- Situation

**DOWN**

- Went quickly
- In the habit of
- Unsuccessful
- Attracted
- Piece of jewelry

**Cinderella** 2002  
Cover illustration  
for *Cinderella* by  
Ruth Sanderson

trinket	engaged	vain	accustomed	scurried	circumstances
embroidered	dazzling	shimmering	persisted	transformed	



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9. Ornamental needlework
10. Situation

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1. Went quickly
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4. Unsuccessful
6. Attracted
8. Piece of jewelry



trinket engaged vain accustomed scurried circumstances  
embroidered dazzling shimmering persisted transformed