

Tendrils

Australian Botanic Artists Regional Network (ABARN)
(formerly BDAS Botanic Artists newsletter)



Singapore Frangipanis, by Jacque Donovan

Activities in 2017

Starting with this issue, the new name for our newsletter will be 'Tendrils'. We have changed the name to better reflect our wider audience and interests. This year we plan to use the newsletter to share information with botanic artists across Australia, through the Australian Botanic Artists Regional Network (ABARN). More details to follow in the September issue.

News from Regional Groups

BDAS Botanic Artists: The Bowral group continues to welcome new members, with some coming from as far afield as Nowra, Sydney and Canberra. It's exciting to have such a dynamic group that keeps growing each year.

Our major project for 2017 and 2018 is the Wingecarribee Flora Project, which focuses on

significant plants in the NSW Southern Highlands. This project will form part of the exhibition at Bowral Gallery in 2018. To support our research for this venture, we visited the Mt Annan Botanic Gardens in Sydney on May 22, and were given a most interesting and informative tour by our guide Robin Davies.



Mt Annan Tour May 2017

News from other regional groups has started to come in and we thank those people who have contributed information. All artists are encouraged to send us news – no matter how brief, to let us know what you are doing, your meetings, exhibitions and special events.

Mackay Botanical Art interest Group (BAIG)

History: The group was formed in 2005 following a workshop attended by the foundation members on botanical watercolour. The group was encouraged by the then curator at the Mackay Regional Botanic Gardens to foster an interest in our local native plants. Its primary objectives are to provide an opportunity to illustrate, understand and study the flora of the region.

Structure: The group is a small (14) and very supportive group with very strong skills and knowledge in botany, illustration and art. One member was recently bestowed with an “Honorary Doctor of Biological Science” recognising her commitment and achievements in the world of botany.

Members also travel to other regions so would be very interested in visiting your groups.

Linkages: BAIG meets and is closely aligned to the Mackay Regional Botanic Gardens and the Friends of the Gardens; please refer to: <http://www.mackayregionalbotanicgardens.com.au>

for more information. Some of the members are also associated with the Australian Native Plants Society through membership of the local Society of Growing Australian Plants branch. There are also linkages with the Mackay Art Society.

Meetings: Mackay Regional Botanic Gardens, Lagoon Street, Mackay. (Coming from the south, just past the Tourist Information Office). We meet on the second Monday and the fourth Wednesday of the month from 9:00am.

Other - The Gardens provide plant cuttings for members to paint. Visitors are encouraged, as is the sharing of knowledge and skills. Note that the meeting room is small and possible visitors need to check that there will be space on any day.

Exhibitions and coming events: An exhibition of member works is scheduled from 4 October to 30 October, titled “Botanica 2017 – Useful Plants”. This will be held at the Mackay Regional Botanic Gardens in the Lagoons Gallery and Cafe.

The Monday meeting day sometimes includes members running workshops. For example, a recent workshop was held on innovative ways of using colour pencils. Another is being planned on shading. No formal workshops are planned at present, however if you are heading to North Queensland you are encouraged to put in a proposal. We would love to see you.

Contacting the group: Main coordinators are: Thelma Farmer, mob. 0419434680 or email: remraf2@bigpond.com

and Maya Harrison, mob. 0436331009 or email: maya.in.nature@gmail.com

Pamela Finger is the coordinator within the Mackay group for ABARN (Australian Botanical Artists Regional Network) email:

Pamela.Finger@bigpond.com

Botanical Artists’ Society of Queensland (BASQ)

The next general meeting of BASQ will be held on July 2, 2017 in the Seminar Room, Mt – Cootha Botanic Gardens Brisbane. For more information about activities, exhibitions and workshops, go to BASQ email: botartqld@gmail.com or the website:

www.botanicalartqld.com.au

Tasmania

Thanks to Jean Henley for a brief overview of things happening in the group of artists she works with in Tasmania. They held an exhibition earlier this year at Port Arthur, and their project for 2017 is working towards an exhibition to commemorate the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens bicentenary next year. Jenny Phillips visited recently and ran two workshops over two weeks, which everyone greatly appreciated. For more information contact Jean via cathryn.coutts@gmail.com

Exhibitions

Current and Future Exhibitions

Curtis's Australian Flowers: Red Box Gallery, Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney, 14 August to 3 November 2017. One of the greatest scientific periodicals, *Curtis's Botanical Magazine*, began publication on 1 February 1787, making it the oldest continuously published botanical periodical.

In the production of the first series of 53 volumes from 1787 to 1827, 188 Australian flowers were featured, with recognition being given to the contributions of acclaimed plant hunters, including Sir Joseph Banks and Daniel Solander of the Cook expedition and Robert Brown from the Flinders expedition to circumnavigate Australia.



Poster for Curtis's Australian Flowers exhibition

The exhibition will showcase more than 50 exquisite 18th and 19th century watercolours of Australian plants from the publication, which

have rarely been seen by the general public. Also to be exhibited are selected volumes from the Daniel Solander Library's collection and original plant specimens from the National Herbarium of New South Wales.

Flora: The Art and Science of the Plant

The 2017 BASA exhibition will be held in the Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney, 31 August to 11 September. See BASA Website for details:

www.botanicalartsocietyaustralia.com

Botanical Art World-wide Exhibition May 2018.

For more details go to the BASA website:

www.botanicalartworldwide.info

Australian National Botanic Gardens, Canberra.

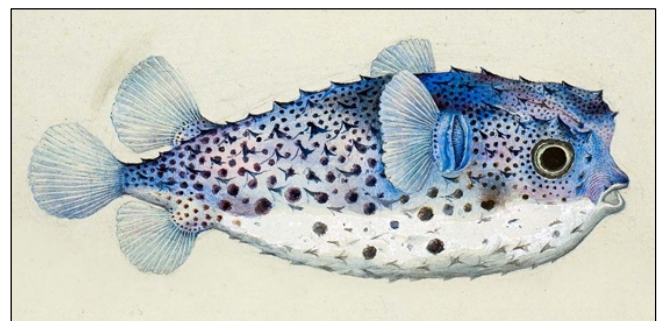
Both exhibitions are held at the Gardens' Visitor Centre.

The Colour of Eucalyptus - 23 May to 25 June

Australian Alpine Flowers in Aboriginal Dot Art - 28 June to 30 July

The Art of Science: Baudin's Voyages 1800-

1804. Coming to the Australian National Maritime Museum, Sydney from August 31 to November 26, 2017 and later to National Museum of Australia, Canberra, March 15 to June 11 2018.

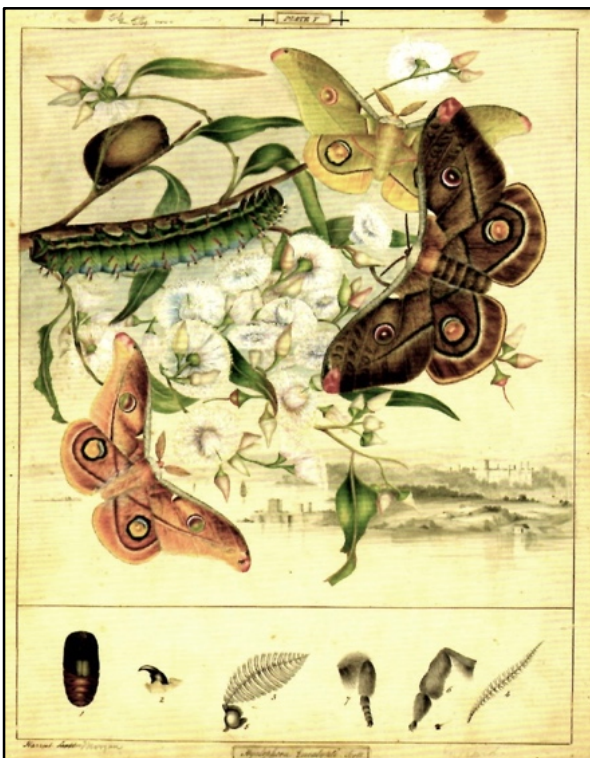


Poisson Diodon (porcupine fish) by Charles-Alexandre Lesueur

Exhibition Reviews

Transformations: Art of the Scott Sisters, Australian Museum College St, Sydney. This beautiful exhibition closed on June 25, this year, but the Museum's website still enables you to see images, download an App and purchase prints of the paintings.

These sisters' works are superbly executed, especially considering they had very limited resources, compared to what we have today. Sketch books were often recycled and some of these were on exhibition. The works displayed a seamless link between scientific and aesthetic elements, enabling the viewer to appreciate both the beauty of the painting and the beauty of nature itself. I was most interested in the composition of the works. Many showed a background with buildings that gives us a cultural setting for the painting, while others indicated a habitat for the insects and plants.



Helena Emperor Moth, *Opodiphthera eucalypti*. By Helena Scott



Hepialid Moth, *Abantiades labyrinthicus* By Helena Scott

Botanical Capital: Cheryl Hodges. Yarralumla Gallery, ACT. By Cathryn Coutts



Cheryl and I at Yarralumla Gallery

In March this year I visited Cheryl Hodges' exhibition *Botanical Capital*, at the Yarralumla Gallery in Canberra. The exhibition was an outstanding achievement for which she should be very proud.

Cheryl has moved well beyond a simple portrayal of plants to a whole new level. For me, two outstanding features of her work are firstly

the background about the early landscaping of Canberra, which engages the viewer in the story behind the work, contributes another level of meaning and puts the subject matter into a context. Secondly her exciting compositions make use of multiple layers and mixed media to incorporate maps and nursery cards into the final image.

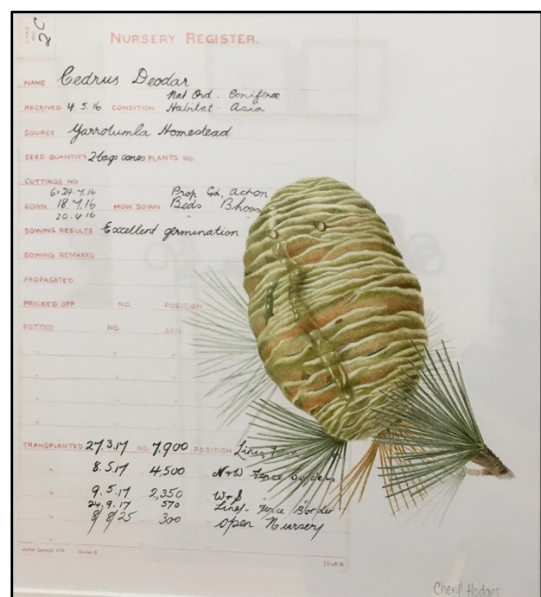


Cheryl has provided below some background information about her exhibition.

Walter Burley Griffin had planned a ‘coloured hills’ concept for Canberra. He envisaged Mt Pleasant being planted with purple flowering plants, Mt Ainslie with golden plants, white and pink for ‘Rosy Hill’ (Black Mountain) and red for

Red Hill. Charles Weston began planting *Callistemon* sp. on Red Hill in 1917, initially 2,880 *Callistemon lanceolatus* (*Callistemon citrinus*). The Yarralumla Nursery cards indicate that between 1917 and 1920 Weston had planted 3,027 *Callistemon citrinus* and 848 *Callistemon rigidus*. Many *Callistemon* sp. still remain on Red Hill, not far down the hill from the café. I have drawn a map in the background of the *Callistemon* specimen, which is from 1917 and indicates the area of the *Callistemon* planting in the red rectangle.

To celebrate the centenary of these plantings, the volunteer ParkCare group Red Hill Regenerators are seeking to nominate them for ACT Heritage listing. The Red Hill Regenerators have been caring for Red Hill since 1989. Reference: Gray, J. *TCG Weston (1866-1935) Horticulturist and Arboriculturist – A critical review of his contribution to the establishment of the landscape foundations of Australia’s National Capital*. See also the website: www.redhillregenerators.org.au



Three of the works in Cheryl’s exhibition

Botanica 2017 By Cathryn Coutts



This year's Botanica showcased many beautiful paintings as always, with far too many to discuss in detail here. I have selected five, however, which I found particularly interesting. The images are all available on the Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney website.

'*Fragaria x ananassa Coccinella transversalis*' by Julie Nettleton. This work shows an exciting use of negative space. By using the simple black and white shapes it plays with our perceptions of 2D and 3D representation. It teases our concepts of the 'black background' and how it is commonly used. On the other hand, the white space, so often poorly considered in botanic art, is used here as an active element in the composition, resulting in an elegant simplicity.

'Autumn Fungi' by Pauline Dewar. I have seen many of Pauline's images in previous exhibitions and always admired her work. Here once again she combines her usual scientific rigour, with outstanding composition, spatial arrangement and colour balance. She combines many elements into a unified whole, while also allowing us to study each plant one by one.

'*Hydrangea sp.*' By Nilavan Adams. An exquisite and delicate work in which Nilavan has combined the subject masterfully with the vellum on which it is painted. Here the vellum is not merely a backdrop but has become an integral part of the work. There is a sense that this work is referencing antiquity, making it timelessly beautiful. The diminutive scale of the work also serves to enhance its special qualities.



Hydrangea sp. By Nilavan Adams

'*Cannabis sativa*' by Lena Rendina. This work gives the viewer an interesting composition along with a detailed study of the plant. But more importantly, it also points to wider debates about the role of this plant in today's world. There is meaning and context in this work that goes well beyond the visual image.

'*Solanum laciniatum* with *Amegilla cingulata*' by Alison Ellis. This Australian native plant is rarely portrayed by botanic artists and Alison is to be commended for bravely going beyond the superficially 'beautiful' in selecting it. Her choice is very pertinent to the theme, a point which many viewers may not have known, i.e. that it is grown in plantations overseas for use in the manufacture of pharmaceuticals.

Mangroves of Australia: Living on the Edge.

**Red Box Gallery, National Herbarium of NSW,
Royal Botanic Garden Sydney, closed on June 9.**

This exhibition of 20 watercolour illustrations of Australia's mangroves, was created through a seven-year collaboration between artist Deirdre Bean and Dr Norman Duke, who together have explored, studied and illustrated mangrove species. Their work highlights the beauty, biology and fragility of mangroves in the face of human encroachment.



Sonneratia lanceolata by Deirdre Bean

This exhibition represented the best possible collaboration between a scientist and an artist.

The paintings tell us about the plants' life cycles, their endangered status and alert us to yet another aspect of our natural environment which is seriously under threat.

It challenges the misguided notion that art and science are incompatible. The artist takes a plant that many people might never look at, and certainly not consider visually attractive, and makes something beautiful out of it. Truly a wonderful exhibition. Worth a website search to see more if you can.

Looking Back and Looking Forward

This issue showcases three works that readers may find interesting. Each one in its own way can help to broaden our understandings about botanic art, because in many ways these works were/are all ahead of their time.



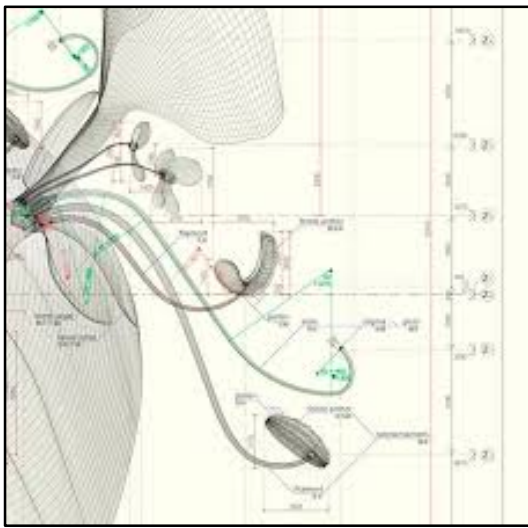
Plants Found in New Holland, 1709 Artist Unknown

This work, 'Plants Found in New Holland', is from 'A Continuation of a Voyage to New-Holland', 1709. It is a copperplate engraving, by an unknown artist. They were likely drawn from dried specimens brought back to England by the renowned navigator, William Dampier from a voyage to Western Australia in 1699. Dampier's account is one of the earliest about the little-known southern oceans. His book and others like it were immensely popular among sailors who followed his routes in the absence of detailed charts. As far as we know, Dampier was the first to study the plants of the coast of Western Australia. Many of us have always believed that it was late in the 18th century before Australian plants were collected and images made. It's intriguing to realise that this was not the case.

Macoto Murayama

Illustrated below are two of the amazing works by Japanese artist Macoto Murayama. There is plenty of his work to see online if you search under the artist's name.

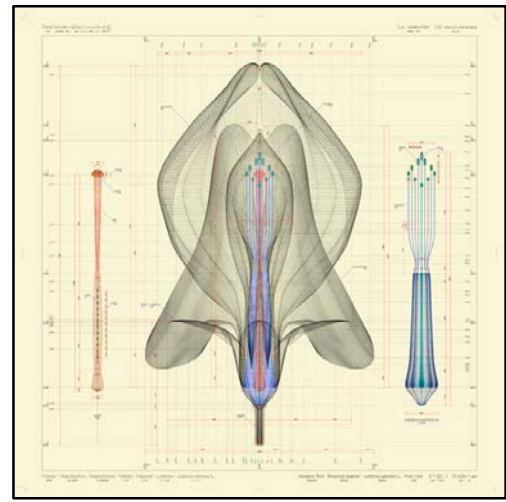
He depicts blossoms from various plants in fastidious detail. For this artist, the worlds of architecture and scientific illustration collided when he was studying at university in Japan. For him, both architectural plans and scientific illustrations are 'explanatory figures' with meticulous attention paid to detail.



In his botanic works he carefully dissects each flower, removing its petals, anther, stigma and ovaries with a scalpel. He studies the separate parts of the flower under a magnifying glass and then sketches and photographs them. Using 3D computer graphics software, the artist then creates models of the full blossom as well as its component parts. He does further work with photoshop and adds in annotations and measurements.

Some thoughts: The notion of botanic art as comprising 'explanatory figures' is an interesting one to contemplate next time you look at some work, or create some yourself. How does this notion sit with your own understanding about

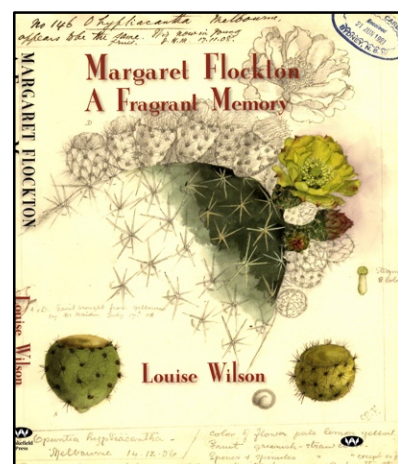
what botanic art is? Do we make images that serve to 'explain' as well as celebrate beautiful forms?



Book Review

'Margaret Flockton A Fragrant Memory' by Louise Wilson. A book that will inspire any botanic artist interested in this remarkable woman's life and work.

The biography gives interesting information about Margaret's early life in England and experiences in Australia in the 1890's. Some may not know of her travels through outback Queensland, and her work as an art teacher in Charters Towers. Family life and her career at the Sydney Botanic Gardens are discussed in some detail. My only regret is that I would have liked to have seen more of her work in the book.



Workshops and Events

Susannah Blaxill

Painting & Drawing Workshops



Come and enjoy yourself with a pencil, pen and paintbrush, and learn from an experienced artist who will teach you new skills and help to further develop the skills that you already have. Both classes are for those students who have prior knowledge of graphite and watercolour work.

3-Day Drawing Workshop – Saturday 18 to Monday 20 November, 2017

Cost of 3-day Workshop is \$597

4-Day Painting Workshop – Saturday 25 to Tuesday 28 November, 2017

Cost of 4-day workshop is \$796

Contact Details: Mobile 0409285261

Email: sblaxill@hinet.net.au

Web: www.blaxill.com

Helen Fitzgerald

Established Five-Day Workshops at Bungendore near Canberra. Suitable for beginners and advanced students.

Contact Helen on 02 62972697

Or visit: www.helenfitzgerald.com

* The **Grampian Brushes** workshops are on again this year from 9-14 September at Halls Gap Victoria. These 2-day workshops include several that focus on botanical and natural history subjects. Go to: www.grampians.com

or email to: brushes@grampianarts.com

Scientific Botanical Illustration with Catherine Waudrop and Lesley Elkan, Royal Botanic Garden Sydney, from 20-21 July 2017. This is just one of several courses in botanic art on offer at the gardens. Go to their website: www.rbg Syd.nsw.gov.au/whatson

Websites

Try the following for interesting information:

www.smithsonian.com

www.paintingwithwatercolours.com

Artist's Profile – Rosie Wade



This is a love-letter to botanical art. It's a late blooming passion. Let me explain.

All my life I have loved plants. One of my earliest memories is walking up my grandmother's front

path, bordered on both sides by lavender bushes higher than my head. Oh, the scent, the softness of the colours, the shades of grey blue and grey green and grey. Overwhelming! So I drew the lavender. But my path was marked for other things. I really wanted to paint and draw and explore art, but was not allowed. I had to go to university and get a degree – preferably in law. Art was not for nice girls. (!) In the intervening years I did botanical cross stitches, made patchwork quilts – always with handquilting in elaborate leaf patterns. I gardened. I went through a stage of trying to grow heritage roses in my coastal garden, not very successfully. I had more success with camellias. I went to university and got several degrees – none of them law. I worked as a teacher, which I loved. In teaching about the environment, I fell in love with native plants, their delicacy and intricacy, their beauty. I joined the Friends of the Botanical Gardens in Sydney, and saw there were lessons in botanical art.



Sometime just before I turned 60, I realised that I had always really, really wanted to paint. There were no classes in my area, and the Botanical Gardens courses weren't available to someone working full time. I was incredibly fortunate.



On the Internet I found Helen Fitzgerald, who runs courses in Bungendore. Helen's vibrant, joyful approach to painting was eye-opening, to say the least. Apart from Helen herself, there were so many wonderful, generous artists – mostly women, who could say, "Mmm...how about using the brush like this...?" Or, "Oh, I like that...", or "You are coming on!" Even better, they'd answer endless questions. "How did you do this?" "Why did you put that there, not over here?" "Do you prefer Daniel Smith or Winsor and Newton?"

To paint a plant is to come to know it, to truly see it, not just look at it, to see why this one has a petiole and this one none, to find out about monocots and dicots, to begin to learn the scientific names of plants, which always seem to me almost magical. (Never mind Harry Potter – just give me a botanical dictionary!) I wanted more – and I found it in the BDAS Botanical Artists. More wonderful women. More truly gifted artists, who are generous with their time and knowledge.

I participated in the "For The Love of Plants" exhibition, and the Beechworth Botanica exhibition – and was hooked. This is a love affair, and this time, I know it's the real thing.

Talking about Botanic Art

This is another new section in which members are invited to contribute their ideas about botanic art and engage all of us in conversations about the art form we love.

You are encouraged to be controversial, be provocative, give us something to think about, discuss and respond to. This article is by Lenore Hall.

Botanical Illustration, Botanical Artists, or Flower Painters?

What are we producing when we sit at our tables applying pencil, paint or ink to our paper? Is it an illustration, a painting, a flower portrait, a still life perhaps? Does it matter what it is as long as we enjoy ourselves? It probably doesn't matter all that much, until we decide to put an entry into a juried botanical art exhibition or an art exhibition which has different sections. Then it could be important for us to know what we are producing.

Paintings of flora fall into quite a few different categories and fulfil different purposes.

Botanical Illustration

Botanical illustration came into its own to allow botanists to identify the various species, and in the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries, to record new plants being brought back to Europe by mainly the Spanish, French, Dutch, Portuguese and English explorers who had sailed to the 'New World'. Not that botanical illustration started in that time span. Botanical painting has been found in ancient excavations of Egyptian and Roman archaeology.

The early illustrations of botanical subjects identified herbs and other plants used for making medicines. So the art had to meet the requirements of the scientist. Art had to show

as many aspects of the plants as possible to allow the botanist to correctly identify it.



Page from *Libellus de Medicinalibus Indorum Herbis*, 1552 (from an indigenous artist of the mid 16th century of the Aztec Empire, depicting medicinal plants).

Species needed to be separated from other species. These were usually drawn by the botanists in pen and ink, and showed all the stages of the development of a plant like full sized leaves, emerging leaves, how the leaves joined the stem, backs of leaves, full flowers in various positions, buds, seeds and pods, stamens, thorns or hairs if any, and the growth habit of the plant. Roots, rhizomes or bulbs might also be included. Accuracy of size was important, and all aspects of the plant were measured, then drawn life size where possible. Plants were often dissected and recorded as such.

The whole illustration became a plant's anatomy, all on the same page, with less emphasis on artistic layout. The background was left as white paper. Plant containers were not included. Colour when it came into use, had to be an accurate match. These criteria for botanical illustration are much the same today,

with the exception that some modern illustrators probably use more colour in their illustrations.



Ceratopetalum gummiferum by Margaret Flockton

There are many such illustrations in existence today in museums and various collections like Kew Gardens in the UK. If you visit any such institutions, it is worth asking if they have anything which is allowed to be seen by the public as they are not always on display, for conservation reasons.

An interesting website on the subject can be found at:

www.botanicalartandartists.com

Botanical Art

The term 'botanical art' sounds as if it should cover all forms of botanical painting, but these days it is used to describe plant painting where the plant itself is portrayed as the 'star of the show', without the full scientific requirements of botanists for identification purposes. That doesn't mean there is no scientific detail included in the painting, because it is, but there is more emphasis on the artistic/aesthetic aspects of the plant or flower, where the subject is placed according to more artistic principles on the paper, than a botanical illustration would

be. The plant however, is still identifiable scientifically from the parts included in the painting.

The structure and growth pattern is portrayed in a realistic style, mostly using watercolour as the medium. Usual inclusions in this type of painting are the flowers (at various angles), leaves (in various positions), buds, correct colour, life-size and characteristics peculiar to the plant like thorns in the case of roses. Some artists include an appropriate background or roots or bulbs, but these are not a requisite, and are left to the artist's pleasure. There may be changes made to parts of the plant in some way, like the angle or placement of a leaf to achieve a more pleasing composition, but the proportion of the whole plant remains.

Sometimes pencil illustrations are included to give the painting contrast or balance by the use of another medium besides colour. But the purpose of the finished painting is to bring a particular species to the notice of the viewers, and to point out how spectacular a natural object in all its intricacy can be. Botanical art combines the aesthetic with science.



Blue Star Waterlily *Nymphaea nouchali*, by Paul Jones

Botanical Portraits

This type of painting could also be called floral/flower painting. Here the plant or flower is not necessarily the star of the show, but the subject matter is subordinate to the painting as a whole. The painting is not used for identifying a plant. Flowers can be sitting in containers of all types, or in a garden bed, the open countryside or on a piece of furniture. Botanical accuracy or scale is no longer necessary if it affects the workability of the painting as a whole. Plants can be modified for various reasons. The painter is often concerned with the balance of the colours, or the interaction of the shapes portrayed. Parts required for identification are left out unless they enhance the painting. The colour might not be quite true to the real plant e.g. a blue red used instead of a yellow red to fit into the overall colour scheme of the painting. The leaf colour might be compromised for the same reason. The whole painting might even be painted in monotone.

In some paintings the technique used to apply the paint can be very broad and free, quite casual in appearance, with detail being one of the first things to be eliminated. But the plant is still recognisable even when the style is more impressionistic.



Flannel Flowers by Cressida Campbell 2013, Woodblock Print

Some artists who paint botanical portraits are Adelene Fletcher, Janet Whittle, Anne Abgott, Soon Y Warren, Elizabeth Kincaid, and Susan Harrison-Tustain. Most have web sites if you wish to investigate further.

Still Life

In this type of painting, the plant or flower is not the star of the show, but the subject matter is subordinate to the painting as a whole. The botanical aspect of the painting is usually a very small part of the whole with other objects like bottles and jars taking up quite a proportion of the space.



Red Hibiscus by Margaret Olley

The painting is not used for identifying a plant. The plant could be reduced to an outline or become magnified so that only a few petals are painted. Yet the flower or plant is still recognisable as a plant, and the viewer receives an impression of the plant. The plant may even have been included as a substitute for something else that hadn't "worked" very well. All the subject matter can be manipulated widely.

One trend these days is to paint mega botanicals, where only a half or quarter of a flower is shown, blown up out of all proportion. It is still botanical, and it is also still life. Still life

is painted to be admired for its artistic qualities and the floral content helps to achieve that. Paintings in this genre can range from the realistic to the abstract in style. Margaret Olley was one famous Australian still life painter. There are many more.



Still Life 1975 by Margret Olley



Pink Flowers on a Red Lacquer Table, 2013 by Shirley Trevena

BDAS Botanic Artists Meetings in 2017

Term 1: February 20, March 20, April 10

Term 2: May 15, June 26

Term 3: July 17, August 14, September 11

Term 4: October 23, November 20, December 4

Publication Deadlines & Contact Details

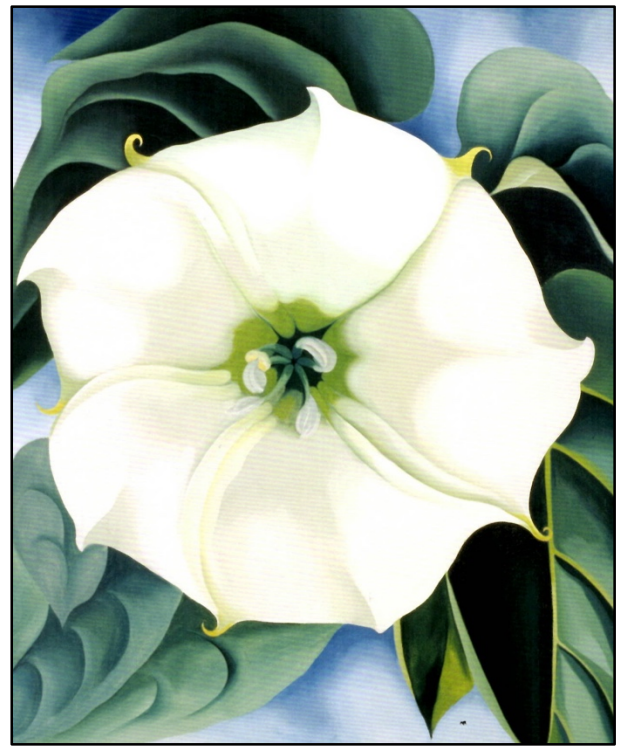
This newsletter was prepared by Cathryn Coutts. Next issue to be published in September 2017.

Contributions are most welcome. They should be received by August 28, 2017.

Please send text unformatted. An email is fine. Images need to be jpegs that are easily emailed.

Enquiries and contributions to:

cathryn.coutts@gmail.com



Jimson Weed/White Flower no 1, 1932 by Georgia O'Keeffe