

Tendrils

Australian Botanic Artists Regional Network (ABARN)



Xanthosia rotundifolia (Southern Cross), growing in the Porongurup National Park, Western Australia

News from Regional Groups

NSW

BDAS Botanic Artists

Organisation for our biennial exhibition and workshops, *For the Love of Plants* is well under way, to be held from October 19-30 this year in Bowral Art Gallery and Workshops.

Tutors and workshops have all been confirmed, and entry forms are attached with this issue of *Tendrils*.

All botanic artists are welcome to submit work to the exhibition and attend the workshops.

The workshops will be held over two weekends: October 20-21 and October 27-28. Tutors include Susannah Blaxill, Rita Parkinson, Helen Fitzgerald, Tracey Miller, Jacqueline Donovan and Peter Wale.

Participants should apply directly to the tutors for a place in their workshop. Contact details are supplied on the application form attached.

The exhibition this year will include a Florilegium of paintings of threatened species of the NSW Southern Highlands. This is the beginning of a project we plan to continue in coming years.

We are delighted that the exhibition will be opened by Lauren Hook, Threatened Species Officer, from Illawarra Office of Environment and Heritage, on Saturday October 20 at 4.30pm.

Central Coast

from Ros Gordon

The Central Coast Botanical Art group (CCBAG) has been meeting regularly for the past fifteen years. Membership numbers have fluctuated over the years and currently there are seven of us enrolled.

We meet at the Gosford Regional Gallery on Tuesday mornings during school terms. The Gallery is a lovely venue with the Japanese Garden as part of the surroundings.

Some years ago, we resolved to have an exhibition every two years, and so we are hoping

to have one in November this year but haven't finalized the dates yet. Our exhibitions are held in the Community Gallery which is part of the Regional Gallery complex.

We are a self-help group mainly, although occasionally we have had a visiting tutor for the day. But for the past few years we have been very fortunate to have had Bronwyn Van Der Graaf in our group so we haven't felt the need to have a tutor!

We seem to be covering all media at the moment - graphite, ink, watercolour, oils and coloured pencils. It's all very enjoyable.

For more information contact Ros Gordon:

ros@ozgordon.com

Queensland

Botanical Art Society of Queensland

Another exciting workshop organized by the Botanical Art Society of Queensland is being held in August. See details below:

Workshop title: Conservation of works on paper for Botanical Artists.

Date: Sunday 5 August, 2018 from 9.30am to 12.30pm.

Presenter: Caroline O'Rorke, Works on Paper Conservator

Cost: \$45 members, \$55 non-members.

For more details contact Margaret Abbott at:

www.botanicalartqld.com.au

Tasmania

from Brenda Haas

Tasmanian artist Brenda Haas has contributed information for this issue about workshops she runs in La Trobe and the Derwent Valley, and some personal background about herself and her work.

She writes: I trained as a nurse, but then my health failed when I was 30. For years, I struggled to keep from despair, before joining an Adult Ed. class, Introduction to Botanical Art, in 2000. The need to concentrate, explore, sharpen the Latin of medicine, combined with close

communion with nature, became the therapy needed to restore my damaged grey cells. Now, at 70, I refer to this passion as my 'raison d'etre', and I feel driven to learn more about every plant I see.

Added to that is a desire to assist anyone who wishes to open their hearts and minds to the gentle pursuit of botanical art. I don't consider myself a great artist because there is always more to learn, but I do have the passion to share the wonderful journey of botanical exploration.

I do a series of Introduction to Botanical Art lessons, which include basic botany, pencil tones we can achieve, and skill to see them, then the ability to accurately transform simple 3D shapes on 2D paper.

Most of my students leave wanting more, and I encourage them to find good watercolour tutors while continuing to study plants with me in a more leisurely manner. Some of my classes have been in a specialist art/coffee shop in Latrobe and more recently a heritage B&B homestead in the beautiful Derwent Valley.

As venues and dates are decided, I post events on my Facebook page. Due to my own restrictions, I am reluctant to offer too many unless I have commitment from enough students to make the class viable. My next workshops won't begin before Spring.

To learn more about Brenda's work, go to her Facebook page and Google search on her name.



Banksia marginata by Brenda Haas

Western Australia

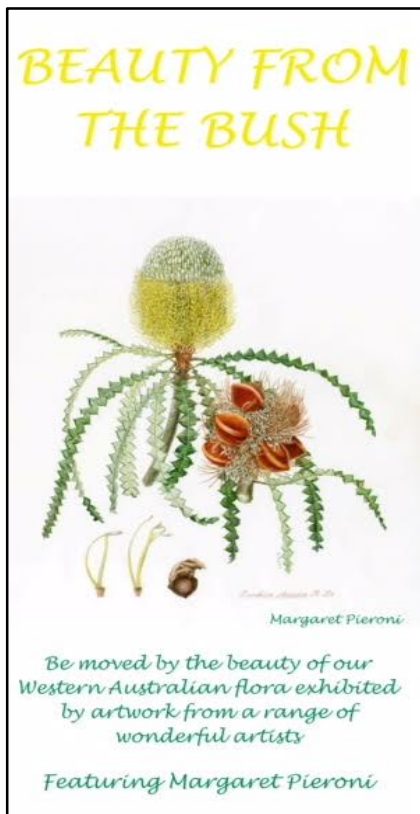
from Marina Lommerse

Western Australian botanical artist Marina Lommerse has sent us some wonderful information about a recent exhibition held in Armadale, called *Beauty From The Bush*.

Held from June 22 to 24, this year, the exhibition was a celebration of Western Australian wildflowers and complements the Wildflower Society of Western Australia (WASA) 60th Anniversary and State Conference. Hosted by the Armadale Branch, the exhibition was partnered by the City of Armadale and supported by the Mary Bremner Bequest.

Artists whose work was exhibited include Margaret Pieroni, Marina Lommerse, Sylvana Douglas, Jennifer Ann Dudley, Bryony Fremlin, Penny Leech, Vanessa Liebenberg, Cielito Marbus, Jill Phillips, Jan Pittman, Trudi Pollard, Ruth De Vos, Danielle West, Delma White and Margaret Wilson.

Marina has sent us the beautiful catalogue from the exhibition so that Tendrils readers can enjoy looking at the paintings. The catalogue is included as an attachment with this issue.



In addition, an essay, *Botanical Art in Western Australia*, by botanist and curator, Sue Radford which was in the exhibition catalogue, is provided in full in the **Looking Back and Looking Forward** section of this issue. I'm sure you will find it fascinating reading.

ACT

from Robin McKeown

Robin is off on an exciting trip to London to attend a seminar on Botanical Art held by the RHS. Nilavan Adams, another Canberra-based artist, is going as well. Robin is also travelling to the Pontic Alps in northern Turkey, to see the alpine flora. We are looking forward to hearing from Robin about her trip when she returns.

The Friends Botanic Art Group at the Australian National Botanic Gardens (ANBG) is going well with about 150 members and three painting groups a month, including one on Saturday mornings which can include full-time workers who can't attend on weekdays.

Following the recent *Art in the Gardens with Friends* Botanical Art Groups' exhibition, held during March and April this year, several paintings were bought by the Friends of the ANBG, with commission from sales of art works making a significant contribution to the Friends, to help support the Gardens.

Helen Hinton is still the email contact point and a team of coordinators and other helpers run the meetings. The ANBG horticulturalists pick wonderful specimens for the artists to paint.

Robin writes: 'We are trying to encourage more men to join the groups, as in the past many of the greatest botanic artists e.g. Ferdinand Bauer have been men, so we think we should have more.'

We need to get our wonderful flora painted or drawn before individual plants, not well illustrated or even illustrated so far, go extinct - the Flora of Australia only being about half written, with still many volumes to go. Photos are generally not used in floras, as they usually only show a few aspects of the plant, e.g. flowers and seeds, which don't arrive on the plant together.

Exhibitions

Future Exhibitions

Mangroves of Moreton Bay. Exhibition by Clare Lovebrand at the Redland Museum, 60 Smith St., Cleveland, Qld. To be opened by Kristin Bain, past President of BASQ, on Friday 17 August. To attend the opening contact: clarelov@bigpond.net.au

For The Love of Plants. Bowral Art Gallery, October 19-30, 2018. Hours 10am to 4pm daily. 1 Short Street Bowral NSW. Open exhibition and workshops, held over the two weekends, Sat. – Sun October 20-21 and Oct. 27-28. See application forms attached with this newsletter.

Exhibition Reviews

Art Gallery of Ballarat. *Beckler's Botanical Bounty: The Flora of Menindee.* On from 24 February to 27 May 2018.

I was fortunate to be able to get to Ballarat to see this wonderful exhibition, and was inspired by the beautiful works on show.

The account of the Burke and Wills exhibition, the work of Dr Beckler in collecting plant specimens at Menindee, and the story of the modern artists who have gone back there to collect and paint the plants Beckler found, are all episodes in a fascinating saga that connects botanists and artists across the centuries.

The Art Gallery of Ballarat has the exhibition catalogue on sale and it is well worth purchasing.



Cathryn Coutts & Cheryl Hodges at Flora of Australia Exhibition

***Flora of Australia – A Botanical Art Worldwide Exhibition.* ‘Linking people with plants through botanical art’.**

By Leonie Norton

The Botanical Art Worldwide Exhibition was presented by the Botanical Art Society of Australia at Ainslie Art Centre at Braddon ACT from 18-27 May 2018. Paintings of Australian native flora from some of Australia’s most accomplished botanical artists opened to an appreciative audience that included representatives from the Embassies of Brazil, Costa Rica, China, Russia, Mexico and Indonesia. They were joined by over 160 people who travelled from many parts of the country to attend the exhibition.

For the first time, botanical art societies worldwide have held a joint, global and synchronized exhibition representing artists and plants from six continents and showcasing artworks of native flora from each of the 26 participating countries – Australia, Bermuda, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Columbia, Costa Rica, France, Germany, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, Russia, Scotland, South Africa, Thailand, Ukraine, United Kingdom and the United States.



Helen Fitzgerald & Leonie Norton at the Exhibition

Over ten days of the Australian exhibition over 1000 visitors were treated to a sideshow of wonderful artworks from all participating countries. The exhibition was a great success and 26 paintings were sold, and a greater appreciation for botanical art was achieved. There were also sales of prints, unframed works,

cards and other merchandise. A catalogue was also produced by the Botanical Art Society of Australia with every contributing artist's painting included. These are available for sale through the society.



Flora of Australia Exhibition



Richea dracophylla by Sue Stuart

An experienced committee organised and managed the entire process which was an enormous undertaking. These were the BASA president Sandra l'Anson, Christine Cansfield Smith and Thea Clark. The works chosen for this exhibition featured plant species native to Australia, which was defined as 'any wild plant indigenous to Australia, including natural hybrids, but excluding any cultivar, man-made hybrids and naturalized exotics'.

Leonie Norton judged this exhibition along with botanical artists Beverley Allen and Jenny Phillips. The 109 paintings selected had also been checked for botanical accuracy, including names, by Canberra based botanists David Albrecht and Anna Monro.

This unique and popular exhibition brought together artists and public to highlight the role of contemporary botanical artists around the globe in calling attention to the need to preserve our botanical diversity. It also paves the way for art to build partnerships and educate the global community about the worldwide renaissance in botanical art.

Forty of the best paintings representing Australian native plants can be viewed on the Botanical Art Worldwide YouTube channel, under 'Flora of Australia'. Also see images on the Botanical Art Society Australia's Facebook page.



Banksia cuneata by Mim Wells



Hakea sp. & Eucalyptus sp. Nuts with Parakeet Feather & Christmas Beetle, by Leonie Norton



Eucalyptus conferruminata by Mary Hare

Looking Back and Looking Forward

Botanical Art in Western Australia

By Sue Radford, Botanist and Curator

Beauty from the Bush is a celebration of Western Australian botanical art depicting the native flora — in particular its famous flowers. It marks this moment in time and explores the many ways botanical artists and illustrators are presenting the natural heritage in this internationally recognized biodiversity hotspot — southern Western Australia. It is intended to spark interest in our special environment and the global

renaissance in the old and respected field of botanical art and illustration. The range of art and artists being exhibited is intended to challenge the understanding of the boundaries of this art form, and how it might be fostered in the State.



The germ of the idea for the exhibition started in 2015 with various exhibitions of wildflower art by local artists which were very well supported. Concern over the perceived lessening of activity by traditional botanical artists and a desire to share the delight of this exquisite art form, set a determination to curate an exhibition in the City of Armadale, where we have many established artists. Over the past two years I've engaged with the collection of 15 artists, many of them local, whose work is exhibited. In the process, I have come to know those in the Botanical Artists Group, WA (BAGs) as well as other botanical artists. Discovering (Kenyan) Bryony Fremlin's delicate botanical art, sparked the realisation that I had first fallen in love with the genre at an exhibition of Joy Adamson's work, in Nairobi National Museum, when I was just seven years old.

This range of work presents science-based botanical illustrations and botanical art. Some traditional and others exploring the edges and

possibilities of the meeting botanical and contemporary art.

In the following I briefly outline the start of botanical illustration in Western Australia, followed by the significant contributions from the late 20th century by the fondly nicknamed BAGs, with a particular focus on one of the featured artists Margaret Pieroni. Next, I talk about the range of other artists and styles presented to contrast the traditional and contemporary approaches present in the State. I conclude with discussion about possibilities for the future development within the field in Western Australia and how it might benefit the region.

Botanical art in Western Australia can be dated back to the 17th century after the Englishman, William Dampier made plant collections on Dirk Hartog Island in 1699, from which the first illustrations were made and published in 1705 (George 2015). Later the several expeditions by the French, especially Nicolas Baudin's, and British expeditions led to more illustrations of our amazing flora.



This drawing of *Ptilotus villosiflorus*, collected by Dampier in 1699 and figured by Plukenet in 1705, is the first published piece of botanical art based on an Australian plant.

Early artists in the 'Swan River Colony' included Margaret Forrest, who was a founder member of the Wilgie Club, the state's first artists' society. With another wildflower artist, Ellis Rowan, following a painting tour to the northwest, a joint exhibition of their wildflower paintings was held in Perth Railway Station reading room in 1889. This is said to have been the first art exhibition in the colony. Other important wildflower artists include Emily Pelloe, Edgar Dell, and Rica Erickson.

BAGs came together in 1991 after an exhibition at the Art Gallery of Western Australia called *Wildflowers in Art*.

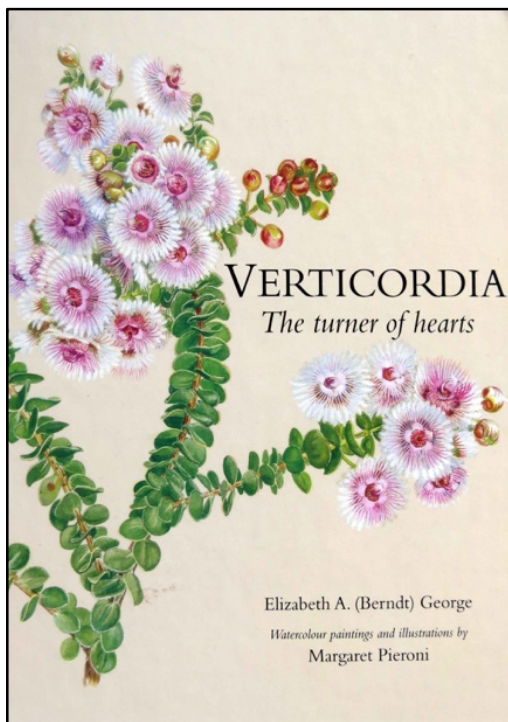
The group evolved over tea and coffee as a supportive forum for the sharing of ideas, techniques and resources, for companionship and a collective response to the business side of their art lives, for example: copyright, contracts and royalties. Founding members of the group include the late Rica Erickson, along with Margaret Pieroni, the late Penny Leech, Patricia Dundas, Philippa Nikulinsky and Katrina Syme. Botanist, Ellen Hickman was later invited to join. Coming to be referred to as BAGs they have done much to raise the awareness of their subject and working methods through exhibitions and publications. Individually they have contributed much to plant systematics, each member having a particular passion. For example, Katrina Syme, contributed hugely to our knowledge and appreciation of WA fungi, and Patricia Dundas and Rica Erickson with orchids. Ellen Hickman has worked on our lesser known Restionaceae and Haemodoraceae (Hickman et al. 2017). As a group, BAGs exhibited annually at the Western Australian Wildflower Festival at Kings Park from 1992 to 2003.

Janda Gooding's book *Brush with Gondwana* documents the artists, the diversity of styles and activities of each member of BAGs which have resulted in investigation, accurate taxonomic depiction and celebration of our fabulous and globally renowned flora of Western Australia.

One of our featured artists and BAGs Founding Member is Margaret Pieroni who has a lifelong passion for wildflowers and their illustration.

She is very well respected for her beautiful, accurate botanical paintings, with dissections of the key floral parts, and has been an important botanical artist and illustrator for many years. With her brief initial pencil sketches Margaret can complete an accurate work in very short time and has been in much demand by the Western Australian Herbarium and universities, for the *Flora of the Kimberley* and the *Flora of Australia*.

Working initially from plants in her bush garden in Attadale, Margaret has also illustrated the books *Leaf and Branch: trees and tall shrubs of Perth*; *Discovering the Wildflowers of Western Australia*; *The Dryandras*; *Exploring Granite Outcrops* and *Verticordia: The Turner of Hearts*.



Verticordia: The Turner of Hearts
illustrated by Margaret Pieroni.

Margaret has always contributed willingly to the Armadale (- Kelmscott) Branch of the Wildflower Society of Western Australia (WSWA), providing many fine-line drawings for visitors' evening leaflets, the 30th Anniversary dinner leaflet, artwork of *Acacia andrewsii* for the 1990 State Conference hosted at Cecil Andrews High School, and also artwork of flowers, cones and nuts for a series of three wildflower cards for fund raising by the branch. She is very special to them.

In her own right and as a founder member of the Botanical Artists Group, Western Australia, Margaret has made a huge contribution to the understanding and love of Western Australian wildflowers. She is a long term, active member of WSWA, the Watercolour Society, the Dryandra Study Group, the Kimberley Society, Bush Heritage, Australia, Greening Australia, William Bay National Park Association and the Albany Threatened Flora Recovery Team.

Now drawing daily inspiration from her bush property in Denmark, WA, Margaret continues to be productive and recently has designed the new logo for the WSWA. We are very fortunate to have such a large collection of new works to display and sell in this exhibition, *Beauty From The Bush*.

We are fortunate to have original works in the exhibition from two of the founding members, Margaret and Penny, with cards and prints available from Philippa Nikulinsky and to order from Ellen Hickman. We are particularly lucky to have some of the late Penny Leech's as yet unseen, unframed originals in our retail section. Penny's early work seems to float across the page and it has been a joy seeing more of her work.

In addition to the BAGs group, we have examples of the very fine traditional botanical artists, Bryony Fremlin, Margaret Wilson (Menadue), Jan Pittman and Cielito Marbus, a new, young botanist on the scene.

I included a range of other artists with exploratory styles and non-traditional mediums used to depict our fabulous Western Australian wildflowers, including textiles and pyrography. I have chosen them to show the versatility that is possible in making beautiful wildflower art and using the flora to dye natural fabrics and create art with them as do Trudi Pollard, Ruth de Vos and Jill Phillips. South African born Vanessa Liebenberg creates incredible delicate images on wood. Imagine capturing the flight of a butterfly. Danielle West brings us tropical, vibrant colours. There are so many other artists that I didn't reach or have room for, but I hope you will experience the joy that I do from at least some of these works. I do believe there is a whole new

appreciation of the art being inspired by our flora. Living in an internationally recognized biodiversity hotspot there is plenty of inspiration for the artist.



Hakea crassinervia by the late Penny Leech is one of over 100 unseen originals recently discovered.

Our other featured artist Marina Lommerse is representative of a number of WA artists with a contemporary take on botanical art. In Marina's case she works in a traditional medium of the field — watercolour — however her powerful use of colour and her focus on large scale flower portraits and magnification of detail sets her apart. Her exhibited work in *Beauty From The Bush* is part of her new series of flower portraits of endemic wildflowers and their pollinators. The series focuses on two regions — firstly, the south west corner of Western Australia and secondly the northern boreal forests of Manitoba, Canada. Both are named biodiversity hotspots, and amongst other things, are significant in terms of their wildflowers. Therefore, this body of work ties into the natural and cultural heritage of each region. Marina says 'I have lived in both areas and they hold a special significance to me. The body of botanical work includes large scale portraits of wildflowers (and pollinators) – rare and/or endangered and/or little known but important and beautiful. Many of these flowers are tiny. I am taking these flowers — some as

small as 2 mm in diameter and magnifying them to in order to expose the intricacies of the form, colours and patterns of these delicate organisms.'

Our Western Australian botanical artists continue to contribute on the national and international stage. Many have exhibited nationally and internationally and are in international collections. In 2018 for example Marina Lommerse was selected to exhibit at *Botanica: Symbiosis 2018* at the Sydney Botanic Gardens, a world renowned botanic art exhibition, and Jan Pittman has been invited to the International Watercolor Exposition in Italy.

On the journey I have found Delma White with her accurate close up paintings of our flowers; botanist, Cielito Marbus, training in botanical art and using a computer tablet to create the image, Jennifer Ann Dudley. I also met long time botanical artist Margaret Wilson whose work is just sublime and shows her skills in a range of styles. Centering us firmly in Kelmscott, is Sylvana Douglas' landscape of Roley Pools, just up river from Avocados. I love her work and it is so clear that you can tell the species she is depicting.

From this journey of discovery I've taken in developing this exhibition a larger vision has emerged. I think it would be very fitting to create a whole industry around botanical art in Kelmscott, which is the name of the place in Oxfordshire, UK, where the great William Morris developed his business, based on floral themes, in the late 19th century. This still continues today in the UK as a huge enterprise. Morris was a leading member of the Arts and Crafts Movement. With a large number of similarly talented artists in the area Kelmscott (Western Australia) today, it would be fitting for such skills to be passed on and generate local businesses and pleasure to the people viewing the work.

As you will see if you visit the exhibition *Wildflowers of Armadale: Fabulous then, Fabulous now* showing at History House Museum, Armadale until late October 2018, the City of Armadale has been a centre for the appreciation of wildflowers since the early days of European settlement. With 75% of the area

still being natural or restored vegetation and with very high biodiversity, we are a great place to start our own wildflower-based empire.

References

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George, A. 2015. William Dampier as a natural historian. *Journal of the Australian Association for Maritime History* 37: 36-52.

Hickman, E.J., Yates, C.J. & Hopper, S.D. 2017. Botanical illustration and photography: a southern hemisphere perspective. *Australian Systematic Botany* 30: 291–325.

<https://www.botanicalartandartists.com>, sourced 08/06/2018. website

Sue Radford, Botanist and Curator

Roleystone, June 2018

Talking about Botanic Art

What does it mean to be a modern-day plant hunter?

By Cathryn Coutts and Rosie Wade

For those of us who like to venture out in search of unusual plants to draw and paint, the challenges are many, but the rewards are considerable. There's a thrill, that's hard to equal in actually finding what you're looking for, or finding something unexpected, and many frustrations and disappointments occur along the way!

The history of botanical painting in the last couple of centuries has been full of stories of dedicated plant hunters, whose valiant efforts, often under very difficult conditions, have given us so many beautiful paintings.

Today in Australia, as many of you may know, there are still lots of plants to be found, recorded and named. My recent visit to the Art Gallery of Ballarat allowed me to appreciate the efforts of the group led by Mali Moir to Menindee, in NSW, in search of plants to paint, which were first discovered during the Burke and Wills expedition in 1860.

Our BDAS Botanic Artists Coordinator, Rosie Wade, has written the following account of her recent efforts at plant hunting, as she searches in the NSW Southern Highlands for native orchids to paint for our Threatened Species exhibition in October this year.



Grevillea rivularis, a threatened species in the Sth. Highlands
Cathryn Coutts Hand-Coloured Monotype (detail)

Rosie writes:

It doesn't quite require a topi and a stiff gin – but it does feel as though I have been stepping in the footsteps of the Great Hunters of the past. Plant hunters, that is. I have been searching for the *Pterostylis pulchella*, now *Diplodium pulchellum*, better known as the Pretty Greenhood or the Waterfall Greenhood. It is recognised as endangered by both state and federal governments. It is one of the many, many native orchids facing extinction in our part of the world.

Orchids are particularly vulnerable. They almost all have only one pollinator, usually a wasp. They have very specific requirements for growing. They have mycorrhiza with which they have a genuinely symbiotic relationship. They are often small, almost inconspicuous, and overlooked in favour of showier, more home-garden-friendly “natives”. (And no, I'm not presenting an argument in favour of all Australian plants, regardless of origin, as natives, or the alternative view that natives are only what's growing in your own immediate square kilometre).

In the case of my pretty orchid, it only grows within 20 meters of a waterfall. It has very specific mycorrhiza and VERY specific climate requirements. It blooms late summer into autumn, in places like Fitzroy Falls and Minnamurra. The rangers at these places, very properly, won't tell you where or if the plant has been seen (botanic artists are notorious for taking "live" specimens, and plant hunters are one of the biggest threats to these pretty little orchids.)

So...the search. Fitzroy Falls, when I go there, is a dustbowl. Repeated high temperatures and the failure of summer rain has left the famous "Wildflower Track" with nothing blooming. Not even the hardy banksias have an inflorescence. Minnamurra, same thing. Belmore Falls...no. Repeated searches for the small rosette of (sterile) leaves (3-5) that herald this plant, produce nothing. As always, it's not what you know, but who. I do, finally, find it, filmed by a friend as part of his documentary on orchids 12 months ago, not where it's known to grow. One single flower. Delicate, brownish red, extraordinary – and heartbreaking.

So why is this plant endangered? Climate change. Bushfires. Development. The failure of populations to understand the specific needs of this plant, and others. The same things that affect other plants through Australia and the world. An unusually dry summer means the plant won't even send out leaves from its underground bulbs. Forget the topi and the safari suit. But the gin to drown my sorrows is looking good.

Artist's Profile

By Lenore Hall

An Artistic Journey

I wasn't born with a silver spoon in my mouth, but I did receive an "artistic streak" as my family put it, which seems to have come from forbears on both sides of the family. Apparently there was an early interest in putting chalk to blackboard, coloured pencil to paper, and paint to colouring books. Those small scratchy brushes which came in the well of a flat tin box filled with small oblongs of poster paint stick in my mind. I always had a new tin arrive in my Christmas stocking.



At primary school we were given a grey book with grey sheets of paper inside and a pack of 10 hard pastels in a Reeves box (they are still available) and told to draw something. That was our weekly art lesson. Art materials in schools not being a priority after WW2, this budding artist had to help herself. Many copies were drawn from books, magazines, even the transfers on kitchen cupboard doors that were popular in the 50's. Occasionally there was a little help from the Women's Weekly magazine which published a black and white insert on how to draw this and that. They became my art Bible for a number of years and I still have them. I found the Walter Foster books later on and used them as a guide.

High school offered Art as an alternative to French, so no guesses as to which was chosen by this student. The materials improved a little, though I remember Mum having a heart attack at the cost of 2 "real" watercolour brushes, a 12-colour palette of not-so-great paints, and a Spirax book to paint in. We learnt a lot of theory, with not a lot of practical painting. I can remember producing a creditable charcoal drawing of Dad's old work boots, but very little else. We all managed to pass our exams, probably because the theory was worth more marks by far than the practical! A career in art was not an option at the end of schooling, but I had discovered I was good at design.

Thereafter for the next 12 or so years nothing happened in my art world, because tertiary studies, marriage and kids intervened. A transfer

to Mackay in Queensland changed things. There was an opportunity of attending a couple of workshops and there I was doing landscapes in oils, immersed in gum trees a la Hans Heysen and Namatjira, and scouring the local library for more information. The development of acrylic paints brought a change in media as acrylics suited my circumstances better.

This continued until the walls were covered in trees and the interest in landscape was waning. In 1991 I discovered folk art. I couldn't get enough of it and I still do it as an adjunct to botanical work. But it was the straw that broke this camel's back. I was overdoing it, and came down with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome. I had to give up my teaching job, and more or less go to bed. It took the next 5 years before I started to see the light at the end of the tunnel and feel human again. Only one thing kept me going during that time – painting. With CFS, the body fails, but the brain continues whirring, often quicker than ever. Painting was the one thing which I could do in small bursts, without affecting the body. It kept me sane, and the urge to paint was as strong as ever.



Heliconia bihai

Folk art was a huge learning curve. I composed my own patterns and colour schemes, and the books published for folk art were invaluable in the “how to do” department. I became hooked on

flower painting and it was good for me. I learnt a lot about the form of leaves and flowers, and the mixing of colours to a depth I had never studied before. In 2009 I took my first step into botanical art – and “real” watercolour paints in tubes no less – when I saw an advertisement in a gardening magazine for Leonie Norton's correspondence course in botanical art. “Paint and learn at your own pace at home” was just what the doctor ordered. I will be forever grateful to Leonie for just running such a course. She most likely didn't make therapy or rehabilitation a priority when planning the course, but for me, it has been almost vital.

Painting in particular is a compulsion for me. I just *have* to paint. I can't go past an art shop, stationers, or newsagency without going inside just for a look. I have always loved detail and colour and find no empathy whatsoever with more modern approaches to art. Botanical art is fascinating in its detail, colour, composition and endless variety of the subject matter. Botanical artists should never run out of something to paint. If we do our job well, the rest of the world should be as fascinated as we are and be more aware of the plant life around them. Hopefully this will “rub off” into caring for it as well.



Variegated Hibiscus

Book Review

By Cathryn Coutts

Burke & Wills: The Scientific Legacy of the Victorian Exploring Expedition. (VEE) Edited by E.B. Joyce and D. A. McCann. CSIRO Publishing 2011.

This marvelous book is very interesting reading for those who like me, are fascinated by the whole saga of the Burke and Wills (VEE) Expedition. I have recently read Peter Fitzsimons' book *Burke and Wills*, which was equally fascinating, all the more so because it introduced me to Ludwig Becker, the German-born official artist for the VEE.

Though not as young or robust in health as the other expedition members, Becker nevertheless left us a magnificent legacy of drawings and paintings done on site as the VEE was underway. His dedication, technical skill and readiness to record all the wonders of nature he found around him, are truly commendable and worthy of the greatest respect, especially because he died during the VEE. By all accounts he was drawing and painting until near the end of his life.



Variagated Fairy-Wren *Malurus lamberti*.

By Ludwig Becker 1861.

In *Burke & Wills: The Scientific Legacy of the Victorian Exploring Expedition*, attention is paid to Becker's work in chapters four and five, which discuss the botanical and zoological legacies of the VEE. The beautiful bird painting illustrated here is just one example of his exquisite natural history art. The field notes which accompany his work give the painting a freshness and immediacy for us today. We can share his wonder at seeing this bird, through his European eyes, for the first time

Traveller's Tales

By Mary-Rose McDonald

(In this section readers are invited to send in tales of visits to places that have inspired them in their art work.)

I have been most fortunate to travel to many unusual places. Lake Baikal is one of these adventures.

My husband and I have been members of the International Dendrology Society (IDS) for many years. The IDS centre is in Herefordshire UK and membership is by invitation. Most members come from botanic gardens, or have arboretums or large estates. In our case a close friend, who has a grand estate in The Netherlands, was the tour leader and invited us to join him in Siberia to see the largest freshwater lake in the world, Lake Baikal.

Nothing quite prepared us for going on tour with a Princess and a Count from Italy, a Marchioness and Viscount from the UK and several other people of so-called notoriety, including a past director of the Kew Gardens.

The common theme was the love of trees and seeing this unusual place in the south of Siberia, close to Mongolia and China in spring, was the highlight of the tour.

Lake Baikal is a World Heritage site. It is the deepest lake in the world, fed from the numerous rivers and streams from lofty mountains and is the source of the Lena river which ends up in the Arctic Ocean.

It is a huge nature reserve 600 metres above sea level, called Ussuriskaya taiga, consisting of Boreal and subtropical forests. To name a few trees such as the Korean pine, Manchurian ash

and the Mongolian oak, does not do justice to the huge list of trees that exist there behind the lake.

I left the tree enthusiasts to discuss their trees, be they pinea , fraximus or quercus, and started to hurriedly sketch the incredible wild flowers on the lake's meadowland foreshore, where our ferry accommodation had dropped us.

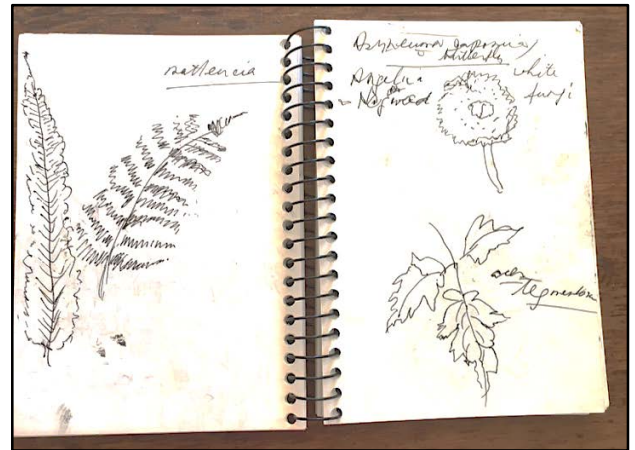
Green, green soft grass and little versions of cottage garden varieties such as geranium, strawberries, violets, violas, snapdragons, lady's slipper, helleborines, mosses and fungus and lichen on the trees were everywhere. I had to work quickly not to be left behind.

I needed to quickly count petals and note whether leaves were on alternate sides or opposite and felt quite empowered with a new sense of knowing the structure of plants.

In 2005, botanical art was not something I had studied. I had dabbled in folk art and loved the decorative arts. Landscapes with gardens had been part of the Fine Arts section of my BA Hons. '80, but not the practical application. These sketches were the beginning. The naming of plants was from my own knowledge of garden and alpine plants, with some quick help from the Russian botanist who accompanied us to look at trees!

This trip was the start of my attempts at botanical illustration and reminds me forever of the wonder of our natural world and the beauty of flowers and trees.

Some drawings from my Lake Baikal trip sketchbooks are shown below.



Sketchbook Stories

(This is another new section for Tendrils. It relates well to Mary-Rose McDonald's story about having to identify plants and make very quick sketches and notes while travelling. It also reflects the frustrations Rosie Wade experienced in her plant hunting story.)

The Art of the Sketch

By Rita Parkinson

In April this year I was lucky enough to join a field trip to the Sabah province of Borneo. For any natural history artist the rainforests in Sabah are such an abundant source of material that the visual experience can simply be over whelming. Life explodes from everywhere. Towering trees reaching for the sunlight, draped in huge spiraling vines, their branches heavy with epiphytes. Birds of all sizes and colours, a profusion of beetles and spiders and ants. Spectacular butterflies and giant moths, lizards, and various species of monkeys. It is one of the most bio-diverse places on earth. It is thought to have around 222 mammals - 44 of which are only found in Borneo, and most famous of course is the Orangutans and Sun bears. It is the estimated home of over 15000 different plants. The flora of the rainforest is awe-inspiring, everything so close together, so much diversity within a limited area. The trees of tremendous size, and at their base a small world of rare fungi and lichens, huge mosses and colossal ant trails wending their way and making their homes in the fallen trees. For a botanical artist nothing could be more sensational than seeing a *Rafflesia keithii* flower, the largest flower in the world in its natural habitat. They can be up to 90cms wide. The one that I saw was not that large, it

was probably about 65cms. It is a strange plant. It doesn't photosynthesize and in some ways, is more like a fungus. But it isn't. It is memorably known as the corpse flower due to its pungent smell.

Add to this a humid environment and you can see that drawing in the field can be challenging. So I decided to generate for myself a nature art journal, beginning with quick sketches done at the time, and supplement this with work in the studio using photos and other sources later.

The skill of the sketch is a necessary skill for artists. It is an important tool for recording, and a means of observation and research. This loose fluid notation comes in handy at the composition stage as well as it is at the heart of the design process, enabling you to explore options before getting too committed. It becomes an exercise in 'seeing pictures', by exploring the possibilities of composition.

Quick notation is also the medium of the sketchbook. Artist's sketchbooks have become an art form in their own right in recent years. There is a growing interest in them. They can be fascinating to many, as they provide insights into some very personal views and the creative process. You can explore some interesting sites to see some fascinating contemporary examples. One of the best: The Sketchbook Project, is a Brooklyn Art Library Initiative, at:

[www:sketchbookproject.com](http://www.sketchbookproject.com)

It views and encourages these skills to be one of the most valuable in an artist's toolbox. It is fascinating to see the variety and sheer inventiveness on show. It publishes challenges based around themes and suggests art prompts to get you going. It really demonstrates the ingenuity and skill, also the fun that this skill can give.

The Nature Art Journal is a specific sketchbook form that is personal exploration using words and images to capture and record experiences. It is another form of the intersection between nature and art. At the heart of this type of journaling is a sketch technique that is quick, easy and simple. They need to capture the essence of a subject in a dynamic way. You can

learn some simple sketch techniques that can get you working quickly and efficiently and developing your own art nature journal.

I needed to brush up on my field sketching skills to get the best out of my encounter with the rainforest. The method use most of the time is a 'three step technique' which is a method that lets you create images with form very quickly. This is really a four-step method because you use toned paper with in a mid, light tone. You begin by quickly defining some basic outlines and contours with a black pen line. Then you add some fast value with a mid-tone wash and finally emphasize the form by adding a few highlights.

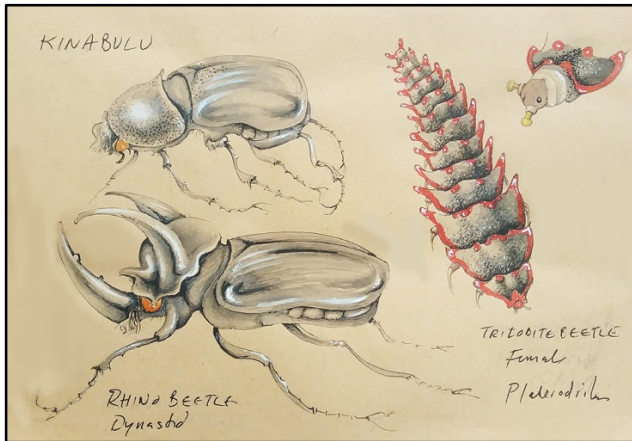


This method is a good way to begin sketching. The sketch at heart should always be a personal form, so when you are familiar with it, you can modify it with other media. You could try a dark conté crayon, such as Dark umber or Sepia. You could also use charcoal in various colours, or colored pencils can be good too. Some artists swear by Aquarelles used with their water washes.

This isn't the only way to sketch by any means. Sketching is in essence a private notation, not for public view. In the end, it has to be a method you are comfortable with. But this can be a great way to start. I have outlined this method primarily as a tool of composition in my latest book for the Botanical Art Files:

[www:thebotanicalpress.com](http://www.thebotanicalpress.com) Instagram Rita Parkinson

The Botanical Art Files: Mastering Composition



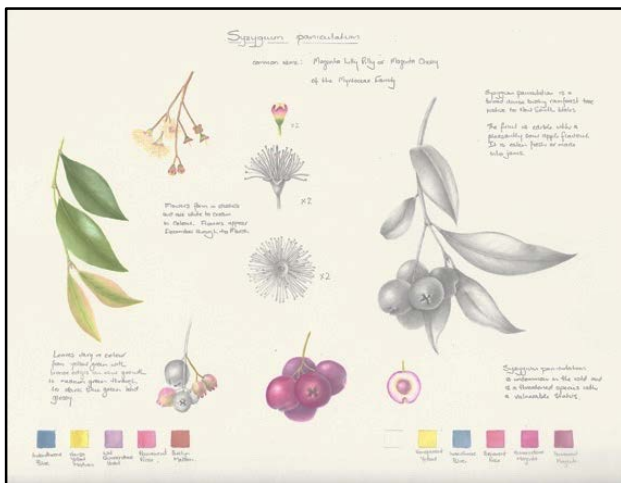
Websites

By Susannah Blaxill

I have always loved Artist's Sketch Book Pages. When these are shown as part of an exhibition of an artist's work, I find them fascinating as they provide a window of understanding into the creative process. Sometimes this visual thinking is just as interesting as the finished, more polished works on the wall.

Recently I came across two interesting websites showing the work of Dianne Sutherland with her online students, and the Oregon Artist' Botanical Art group, USA, whose members have contributed to a Sketch Book Exchange.

Finally, Sandra I'Anson shared with me her very beautiful Sketch Book page.



Sandra I'Anson's Syzygium Sketch Book Page

The links are below

Dianne Sutherland:

<https://www.botanicalart-online.com/creating-a-sketchbook-cvw9>

<https://botanicalsketchbookcollective.blogspot.com.au/>

Oregon Botanical Artists: <http://www.oba-artists.com/>

Sandra I'Anson – search for Sandra I'Anson Syzygium Sketchbook Page on: <https://www.pinterest.com.au>

Workshops and Events

A BASQ workshop. Conservation of works on paper for Botanical Artists. Sunday 5 August, 2018 from 9.30am to 12.30pm. Presenter: Caroline O'Rorke, Works on Paper Conservator

Cost: \$45 members, \$55 non-members.

For more details contact Margaret Abbott at:

www.botanicalartqld.com.au

FOR THE LOVE OF PLANTS
 BOTANICAL ART EXHIBITION
 19-30TH OCTOBER 2018
 BOWRAL ART GALLERY
 OFFICIAL OPENING AT 4.30 PM SATURDAY 20TH OCTOBER
 BY LAUREN HOOK
 THREATENED SPECIES SPECIALIST FROM THE OFFICE OF HERITAGE AND ENVIRONMENT
 WORKSHOPS: 20-21ST AND 27-28TH OCTOBER
 Workshops will be offered on both weekends from some of Australia's leading botanical and nature artists, including Susannah Blaxill, Rita Parkinson, Helen Fitzgerald, Tracey Miller, Jacqueline Donovan and Peter Walk.
 For more information, to apply for workshops or enter the exhibition, please email bdasbotanicartists17@gmail.com or contact **Rosie Wade** on 02 4421 5949.
 BOWRAL ART GALLERY (BOAS) www.bdasgallery.com

For The Love of Plants

Following our highly successful event in 2016, the BDAS Botanic Artists group decided to hold a second *For the Love of Plants* exhibition and workshops this year.

Please see application forms for the exhibition and workshops attached with this newsletter. Artists should apply directly to tutors for a workshop place. Tutor contact details are shown on the application form.

The weekend workshops are as follows:

October 20-21, 10am to 4pm:

Tracey Miller – Macro Floral Painting

Susannah Blaxill – Graphite and Ink drawing

Helen Fitzgerald – Birds in Botanicals

October 27-28, 10am to 4pm:

Rita Parkinson – The Art of the Sketch

Jacqueline Donovan – Botanical Drawing
(Drawing from the Natural World)

Peter Wale – The Art of Coloured Pencils



Workshops with Susannah Blaxill

Good drawing skills are the basis for recording in detail subjects from the natural world, be they flowers, fruit, vegetables, seed pods, insects, shells and so on. In order to create a good painting the student needs a sound knowledge of drawing, composition, colour and painting techniques.

In the Drawing Workshops, fine graphite and ink work will be taught, and all techniques will be carefully explained and demonstrated.

In the Painting Workshop, students will be taught how to apply smooth, graduated washes with colour changes within the wash, an understanding of colour mixing and the application of dry brush. Again, teaching will be facilitated by demonstration and discussion.

With a class size of 6 participants, this will guarantee each student ample opportunity to interact with the tutor. Dates are:

Saturday 6th to Sunday 7th October, 2018

Drawing Workshop at Artist's Studio Mittagong

Tuesday 9th to Friday 12th October 2018

Painting Workshop at Artist's Studio Mittagong

Saturday 20th to Sunday 21st October, 2018

Drawing Workshop at Bowral District Art Society

Contact: Susannah Blaxill mobile 0409 285 261

Web: www.blaxill.com

email: sblaxill@hinet.net.au

Publication Deadlines & Contact Details

This newsletter was prepared by Cathryn Coutts. Next issue is to be published in September 2018.

Contributions are most welcome. They should be received by August 31, 2018.

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

There is no charge for advertising in this newsletter.

Enquiries and contributions to: cathryn.coutts@gmail.com