

# Tendrils

Australian Botanical Artists Regional Network (ABARN)



*Lantana and Spider, Watercolour and Paper, by Deirdre Bean (reproduced with permission of the artist)*

## Editor's note

Tendrils is an online newsletter distributed across Australia. Commenced in 2017 by artists from Bowral, Canberra, the Shoalhaven and Sydney, it aims to share ideas and information in regional and metropolitan locations, among those who share a passion for the botanical art genre.

We welcome news and articles from individuals and groups across the country. You are encouraged to advertise workshops, events and exhibitions free of charge.

Please just send text contributions in a regular email. Images need to be jpegs that are easily emailed.

Enquiries and contributions to Cathryn Coutts, at: [cathryn.coutts@gmail.com](mailto:cathryn.coutts@gmail.com)

Issues are published in March, June, September and November. Deadline for contributions is the first Friday of each month of publication.

## News from Regional Groups

### NSW

#### BDAS Botanic Artists

In addition to our regular meeting dates, our group enjoyed a workshop on March 9-10 with John Pastoriza Piñol. The two days were spent painting a chosen subject, focusing on composition, painting techniques and colour theory.

We also had a very interesting guided tour of the historic Bundanon Homestead and Arthur Boyd's studio, on April 17. The tour was led by our group coordinator Rosie Wade.

Gifted to the nation by Arthur Boyd, the homestead is located on 1,100 hectares of pristine bushland overlooking the Shoalhaven River, near Nowra NSW. This was a very special experience for us, made particularly memorable by our very informative guide Rosie (pictured in Arthur Boyd's studio).

Our work continues on the Florilegium of Threatened Species in preparation for our next *For the Love of Plants* exhibition in 2020.



Rosie Wade, our Tour Guide in Arthur Boyd's Studio

Our 2019 meeting dates are as follows:

Term 1 – February 18, March 18, April 15

Term 2 – May 20, June 17, July 15

Term 3 – August 12, September 23,

Term 4 - October 21, November 18, December 2

## Queensland

### BASQ (Botanical Art Society of Queensland)

There are a number of workshops planned for later this year. Two coming soon are:

*Art folios and handmade books* with tutor Jan Houghton, on Fri-Sat. 19-20 July.

*Drypoint etching* with tutor Kylie Stapleton, Sat-Sun. 24-25 August.

For more details about these and other BASQ workshops see Workshops section of this newsletter on page 15. Also the BASQ website:

[www.botanicalartqld.com.au](http://www.botanicalartqld.com.au)

## Tasmania

From Jean Henley

### Forthcoming workshop

Botaniko is hosting a workshop in Hobart from 28 November – 1 December 2019 inclusive – ***Contemporary Botanical Art - Bigger and Better***, led by prominent Sydney art educator

Leonie Norton. This unique workshop will allow participants to take a small subject/photo and create a large painting using a grid system.

This workshop offers an ideal opportunity to explore another dimension of botanical art, to observe and explore composition, colour, form, texture, light and tone to create a contemporary botanical painting.

If you would like further information please contact Janet Thompson: [jvcoghill@gmail.com](mailto:jvcoghill@gmail.com)

## Exhibitions

### *Flora: The Art and Science of the Plant.*

#### Botanical Art Society of Australia (BASA).

Exhibition to be held at Art Space on the Concourse, Chatswood Sydney, 28 August to 8 September, 2019. For details see the website:

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

### ***Wild Thing*, Lion Gate Lodge, Royal Botanic Garden Sydney.** 4-18 August 2019, 10am to 4pm.

A wild and wonderful art exhibition of creatures great and small that inhabit the Botanic Gardens. Something special for those who enjoy paintings of natural history subjects. See website:

[www.rbg Syd.nsw.gov.au/wildthing](http://www.rbg Syd.nsw.gov.au/wildthing)

### **The Margaret Flockton Award Exhibition, 2019.**

If you missed this exhibition earlier this year, you can still see it at two other venues.

The Australian Plantbank, The Australian Botanic Garden, Mount Annan, NSW. 8 June to 28 July, Mon. to Fri. 10am to 4pm.

The Blue Mountains Botanic Garden, Mount Tomah, NSW. Visitor Centre, 9 August to 15 September, 9.30am to 4.30pm.

## Exhibition Reviews

**Janet Laurence: *After Nature*.** Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA) Sydney. This exhibition closed on June 10, but an Internet search will provide lots of information about the exhibition and the artist.

For over 30 years Janet Laurence has explored the interconnection of all living things through a multi-disciplinary approach. She has a strong connection with the environment and the scientific research and conservation work being undertaken by scientists.

*After Nature* included key works and themes using sculpture, installation, photography and video, glass and scientific glass apparatus. She also included the trunk of a dead red river gum which lived in the Australian Botanic Garden Mount Annan for 32 years. The tree formed part of the exhibition, placed lying across the floor. The artist was fascinated by the marks made on the trunk and limbs - bore holes from the many beetles that had lived on the tree. Bandages were tied around parts of the tree to represent the fragility of nature.

As I am also keenly interested in conservation, Janet Laurence's work provided me with a lot to think about, such as her concerns about the damage to nature that we see happening all around us, and her assertion that nature is in urgent need of human intervention. She interprets that as nature being like a person on life support.



Janet Laurence *Heartshock (After Nature)* Red River Gum 2019

*Deep Breathing: Resuscitation for the Reef* (see following picture) was an installation comprised of various wet specimens, corals, pigment, acrylic boxes, laboratory glass. Originally

exhibited in Paris in 2015, this installation is a 2019 iteration.

While this is in no way traditional botanical art, Janet Laurence conveys important messages in her work about the need to protect and conserve plants and the natural world. As botanical artists, we too can use our skills and talents in a similar way - to inform the public about the need for conservation of nature on which we all ultimately depend.



Janet Laurence *Deep Breathing: Resuscitation for the Reef*

### ***Capturing Nature: Early Photography at the Australian Museum, 1857-1983, Sydney.***

On until July 21, 2019. There is still time to see these fascinating never-before-seen images dating from 1857 to 1893. They have been printed from the Australian Museum's collection of glass plate negatives and are some of Australia's earliest natural history photographs. Sitting at the nexus of science and art, they tell both the story of pioneering research as well as the advent of photography in the young colony less than 20 years after the birth of photography in Europe ([australianmuseum.net.au](http://australianmuseum.net.au)).

I was captivated by the beauty of many of the images in this exhibition - photographs of considerable artistic merit. Here are a couple of examples.



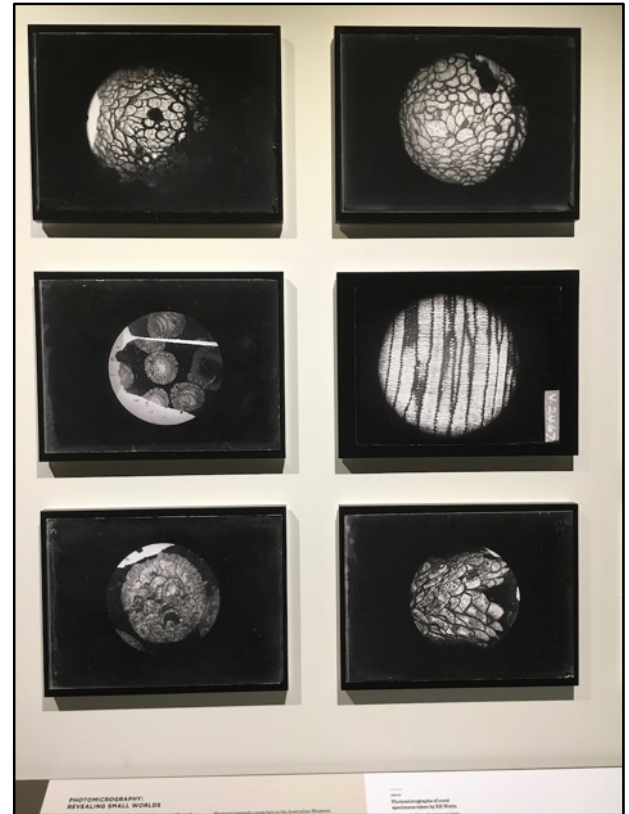
Above is a work by Harriet Scott, who along with her sister Helena, is well known for her natural history illustrations. This image is a hand-coloured lithograph of an *Aspidites melancephalus* Black-headed Python, made for Gerard Krefft's book *Snakes of Australia*, 1869.

Scott used a photograph as her model, but in the process of drawing and colouring she improved on the original photograph. As well as giving the snake rich colour, she was able to include the snake's head, which is obscured in the photograph. ([australianmuseum.net.au](http://australianmuseum.net.au))

Some early examples of photomicrography also caught my eye. Microscopes were already well established as scientific tools by the time photography was invented in England and France in the late 1830's. Combining microscopes with cameras offered the exciting possibility of capturing true-to-life microscopic detail for the first time on glass.

With improvements in camera lenses and artificial lighting in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, photomicrography became standard scientific practice. Life could be viewed at cellular level, and photomicrographs captured images of algae, diatoms, bacteria, tissue sections and human blood for the first time. ([australianmuseum.net.au](http://australianmuseum.net.au))

The photos of coral fossils shown below are a good example of the beauty of natural forms made visible through photomicrography.



Photomicrographs of Sections of Coral Fossils by Edgar Ravenswood Waite in the early 1890's

### ***Fish and other things*, Deirdre Bean.**

Stella Downer Fine Art, 1/24 Wellington Street, Waterloo, Sydney.

This exhibition was held from 5 to 30 March this year. The Internet will enable further viewing of the artist's work, now that the exhibition is over, and I encourage you to do so.

I was charmed by this artist's delicate touch and delightful whimsical juxtaposition of objects in her paintings. She incorporates a very personal touch and with the aid of the Gallery's exhibition notes I was able to enjoy it more, knowing some of the artist's background.

Deirdre Bean has kindly given permission for one of the paintings, *Lantana and Spider*, to be used for the cover of this issue. Here are the Gallery notes about the exhibition.

'Deirdre Bean presents *Fish and other things*, a cabinet of curiosities that delight in the spoils of collecting and the catch. From delicate compositions of Bracken fern

and a cicada, to a John Dory with two shells, or a heaped pile of Lantana and a spider, Bean sparks joy in the natural world. This attention to the minutiae of her surroundings has been ongoing in her work, as she writes, “since my childhood I have been inspired by the natural world. Our family home was surrounded by pristine bush. The nearby beach and river was an idyllic playground. My father was an expert fisherman, and it seemed we had an endless supply of food from the sea. My recent paintings are inspired by those times”. The simple couplings of fish with plates and utensils spark musings of potential feasts to come. For Bean the works celebrate the moments of shared feasting at the family table and reinforce the idea of fish as food. ‘

The paintings warrant close inspection, so that one can enjoy the artist’s delicate touch with watercolour. Her pigments are applied with masterful subtlety, softly blending one colour to another and to the unpainted areas. It is never overdone. She is always in control of a medium that can be very challenging.

Her paintings, however, go well beyond technical mastery, to give us a lot more - something to think about, lovely little surprises, a personal touch. Exquisite work indeed.



*John Dory with two shells*, Deirdre Bean Watercolour on paper

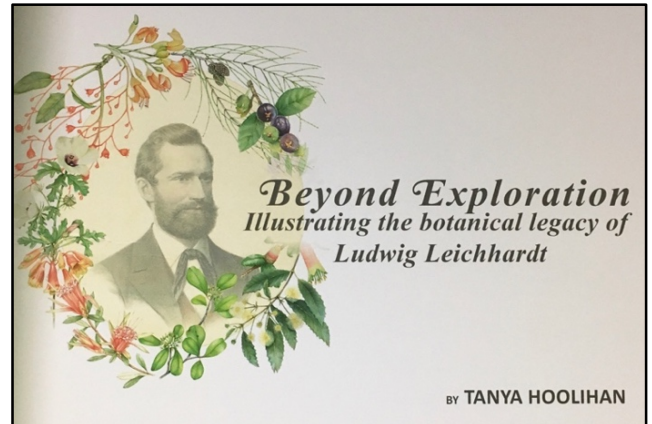
Deirdre Bean kindly gave permission for us to reproduce her painting *Lantana and Spider*, on the cover of this issue. Here is the story she provided about this work

*As children, we used to walk partway along a track to school where lantana was abundant. We used to gather handfuls of the flowers and throw them at each other, so that the tiny flowers would annoyingly knot in our hair. Very pretty. The spider in the painting was inspired by another childhood memory. The huntsman spiders would hide in the bush and race out unexpectedly as you brushed past. Scary but not dangerous.*

## Looking Back and Looking Forward

By Cathryn Coutts

*Beyond Exploration: Illustrating the botanical legacy of Ludwig Leichhardt.* Tanya Hoolihan



This exhibition was held at Leichhardt Library in Sydney from April 1-27, 2019, where I was fortunate enough to see it. I encourage the artist to show these works again if possible, so that many more people can enjoy them.

They are a very beautiful collection of paintings and some fascinating historical information about an important early plant collector and naturalist, whose scientific work has been overlooked, in the light of his disappearance during his last expedition.

I have chosen to write about it in this section because it is such a wonderful example of how looking back and looking forward can be so important in botanical art. We have much to learn about the collectors and explorers from the past who brought to our notice the wonderful native flora of Australia.

Tanya Hoolihan has a PhD in Natural History Illustration from the University of Newcastle. Her research involved producing a series of traditional botanical illustrations using the recorded observations and collected botanical specimens of the German explorer, Ludwig Leichhardt.

The artist writes:

“The objective of my research involved collating Leichhardt’s recorded material with his collected specimens. By examining and dissecting Leichhardt’s

written records I was able to gather information regarding what, when and where flora specimens were collected. Leichhardt's specimens, which are stored in national and international herbaria, were then examined and correlated to his written accounts. The process involved linking more than 3500 specimens collected by Leichhardt with approximately 3000 botanical references in his diaries and letters.

From this research, I illustrated series of botanical illustrations depicting specimens that were observed, recorded and collected by Leichhardt more than 170 years ago. These illustrations provide a visual record of his observations and collections in much the same way as an accompanying artist would have done on Leichhardt's original journeys of exploration.

The hope is that through visual engagement these illustrations will increase general awareness of the scientific contribution Ludwig Leichhardt made to the recording and understanding of Australian flora."

Tanya Hoolihan's exhibition shows 16 paintings of plants that Leichhardt observed between 1842 and 1844, collected around Sydney and other locations including: Newcastle; Lake Macquarie and Brisbane Water; Glendon and the Upper Hunter; Liverpool Plains and the Darling Downs; and Moreton Bay and surrounding areas.

A fascinating collection of paintings supported by the artist's research into the explorer's historical records.

## Artist's Profile

**Margaret Stones, Botanical Artist, 1920-2018**

by Jenny Simons



I met Margaret when I was about 16, introduced by her uncle, William Stones, who was an employee of my father's and who became a family friend. I didn't see her often in the early

years as she lived in Melbourne, but after she became a botanical artist she visited Sydney from time to time, to use the facilities of the Sydney Herbarium and to catch up with her uncle and aunt.

To further her career, she moved to London and rented part of a house near Kew Gardens, living there contentedly, working for Kew and becoming friendly with the elderly lady whose house she was sharing. When the owner died she stipulated in her will that Margaret should have the first option to buy the house. Margaret was delighted to accept. It was a beautiful two-storeyed cottage, rather old-fashioned and very English in its layout. Margaret used the sunroom, off the sitting room, for her office. It was airy and had a view of the garden.

When John and I lived in London in the 1950s we used often to visit Margaret. She had an open, enthusiastic personality and would welcome us warmly, with news about family, friends and Kew. We would walk together to the Gardens and she would show us some little treasure that was in bloom. We also visited the Australia House and I never failed to shed a tear at its lovely Australian scent. After the visit to the Gardens we would return to Margaret's house for lunch. She was a good cook and fully enjoyed being mistress of her own house.

After seven years back in Australia John and I returned for a year in London with a young family. We visited Margaret as before; the routine was the same and the visit is still remembered by my older daughter.

Once Margaret allowed me to watch her at work and I was mesmerised by her calm, methodical approach, making preliminary sketches, arranging the material to display its beauty, at the same time displaying its botanical features, matching the colour of the subject with her paint samples, taking notes - and revelling in the beauty of the plant material that she was working with. At that time it was a species cyclamen.

She told us about the hazards of working on the endemic Flora of Tasmania: plant material that died in transit; visiting Tasmania and unable to find a live example of her next subject; being sent the wrong material; the expected material

failing to arrive. She enjoyed immensely the commission to paint the Flora of Louisiana, travelling and residing at Baton Rouge over several years and enjoying the interesting floral material.

When I had been some years in the workforce, I was able to commission a work from Margaret. She asked me what I would like for the subject. I left it to her: 'Paint something that I have never seen.' She selected *Helleborus foetidus*, quite new to me, a Sydneysider. I had it framed by the best framer in Sydney at that time. My painting has an important place in my sitting room and the hellebore grows in my garden.



Jenny Simons with her picture by Margaret Stones

## Talking about Botanical Art

### *Botanical art in Australian Museums: Revival and relevance*

By Alison Wishart

First published in Museums Galleries Australia Magazine, Vol. 27(1), Museums Galleries Australia, Canberra, Summer 2018, pp. 36-41. Reprinted with permission from Australian Museums and Galleries Association.

In 2001, I walked into an exhibition at the National Library of Australia and was transfixed. I was surrounded by paintings of banksias: their precision and detail were beautiful. For me, this was the 'wow' moment that every exhibition curator and designer hopes to achieve.

Banksias are spiky, sharp, messy plants, but Celia Rosser's intimate watercolours rendered

them serene. It was a revelation, and an experience I have never forgotten – and never repeated – in 17 years of visiting numerous exhibitions since that day. [1]

In 2018, to further my love of botanical art, I caught the train to Katoomba, west of Sydney, to attend the opening of *Blue Mountains Botanica* at the Blue Mountains Cultural Centre. I was so shocked by the experience that I wrote a review, partly to understand my negative reaction to an exhibition I expected to embrace, and partly to find some redeeming features in the show. [2] This led me to try and answer the question, what is botanical art and what is its role in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

Botanical art commenced as a means of identifying different herbal plants for scientific classification, and their use as medicines. Visual representations (or artworks), usually accompanied by descriptions of plants' therapeutic properties, can be found in early codices dating from the first century BCE. [3] These drawings and their accompanying text were copied and translated again and again in subsequent publications, often becoming less like their original botanical specimens and more inaccurate with each rendition. The golden age of botanical art emerged after the Age of Enlightenment and the expansion of science, when rich patrons commissioned skilled artists to draw the numerous exotic specimens 'discovered' and collected during and after the Age of Exploration. In the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, the quest for scientific knowledge merged with artistic practice, resulting in an exquisite refinement of botanical art.

Ferdinand Bauer is one of the best-known botanical artists from this period. He accompanied Matthew Flinders on his circumnavigation of Australia in 1801–3 and produced more than 2000 drawings of Australia's flora and fauna. Such was Bauer's dedication to accuracy and colour fidelity that he enhanced a numbered colour code used by other artists to denote the colour details of the plants he was sketching in the field – so that when he was back at his desk, in Vienna or London, and had time to mix pigments to gain the correct shade, he could virtually 'paint by numbers'. His

refined understanding of nature's palette obliged him to use more than 400 numbers to indicate the different shades of green. [4]

Botanical art is closely related to what later became known as 'flower painting' (usually in watercolours). This genteel artform flourished in the Victorian and Edwardian eras, since it was regarded as an appropriate leisure pursuit for middle- and upper-class 'ladies'. They were tutored in the refined drawing-room skills of painting and embroidery, while their lower-class sisters were taught the practical skills of cooking, cleaning and sewing. However, these feminine flower painters were not encouraged to stray into botany, as studying the reproductive parts of plants involved an understanding of sex, which was considered licentious and unladylike. [5] Nevertheless, the intrepid work of 'flower hunters', such as Ellis Rowan and Harriet and Helena Scott, added greatly to the 19<sup>th</sup>-century canon of botanical knowledge of Australian flora.

The Botanical Art Society of Australia defines botanical art as: 'a liaison between the disciplines of art and science':

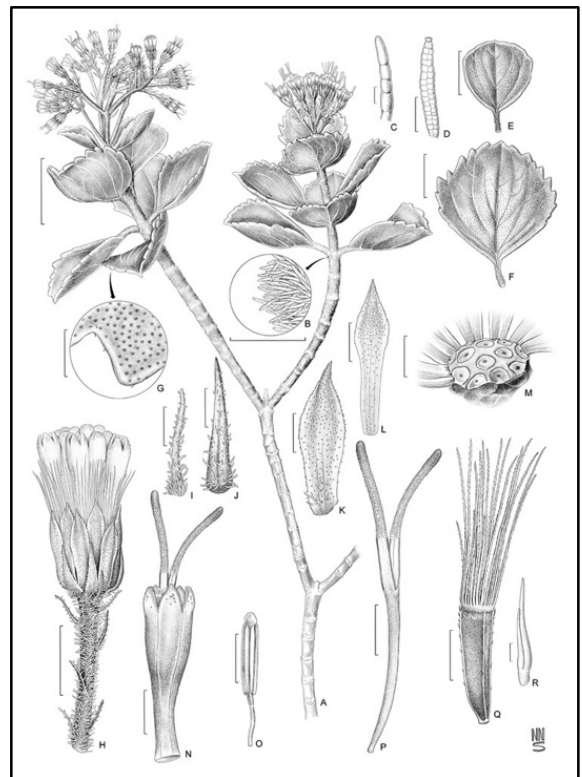
Specifically, the aim is to capture the essence of the plant, its form, texture and growth habits, in a two-dimensional medium such as painting and drawing. [6]



Morgyn Phillips, *Eucalyptus polyanthemos*, Red Box, graphite and coloured pencil on paper, no.76, in the *Flora of Australia* exhibition presented by the Botanical Art Society of Australia, 2018.

The Society's exhibition in May 2018 at the Ainslie Arts Centre, Canberra, displayed selected works from 109 botanical artists, which were then gathered into a commemorative book: *Flora of Australia*. [7] This event was part of a worldwide celebration of botanical art, in exhibitions held simultaneously in 25 countries, which showcased native flora.

The *Margaret Flockton Award* exhibition (a companion exhibition to *Blue Mountains Botanica*) fits into the latter category. Named in honour of the first scientific illustrator employed at the Royal Botanic Garden Sydney from 1901 to 1927, this award celebrates contemporary botanical illustration that still supports scientific objectives. [9] These botanically explicit, extremely detailed drawings could also be considered botanical art. [10] Their beauty lies in their completeness and exact detailing, evident even under magnification.



*Lapidia apicifolia* by Natanael Nascimento from Brazil, the winner of the first prize in 2018 for the Margaret Flockton Award.

*Blue Mountains Botanica* stretches the usual understanding of botanical art to incorporate art works that include 'botanical elements'. This extends to other formats such as James



Blackwell's use of laser-cut paper and natural seeds, Edith Pass's flannel flower installation, and Jennifer Leahy's HD multi-media art. [11] Depending on your perspective, this variety is either an excellent example of lateral curatorial thinking or a corruption of a special artform and its ancient traditions. However, simply because an artwork features flora does not make it 'botanical art' – renowned Scottish artist-designer Charles Rennie Mackintosh drew beautiful roses, but he was not a botanical artist. The essence of botanical art is its concern for botanical accuracy versus a more generalised or imaginative depiction of plants.



Edith Pass's installation 'Hollow Men' is displayed in front of Jennifer Leahy's 'Timeslip' digital HD work in *Blue Mountains Botanica*. On the right-hand wall are watercolours by Julie Nettleton. Photograph by SilverSalt Photography.

Perhaps you might ask: 'Does it matter?' Is it important to distinguish between botanical art, botanical illustration, and other ways of incorporating botanical elements into art? [12] Or, is this conjecture distracting from a more fundamental question: What is the purpose of botanical art/illustration today, given that we have excellent photographic equipment and microscopes with which to study, identify and describe our flora?

It is generally accepted that photography cannot replace botanical art for the purposes of identifying plants, however, it is an aid. Botanical art is more resourceful in providing a three-dimensional depiction, and can even incorporate aspects of the fourth dimension (of time). It can show the different stages and seasons of a plant in seed, flower, and fruit in the one drawing, and it can represent the size of each part and stage of a plant's life-cycle relative to the others.

A contemporary role for botanical art is encouraging environmental conservation. One of the subtle but persuasive 'take home messages' of *Blue Mountains Botanica* was that botanical art encourages viewers and artists to better appreciate the natural environment – for its beauty, biodiversity, and cultural significance – and this can motivate us to work together as a community to 'care for country' as a legacy for future generations. Botanical art can remind us of what we lose when gullies, parks and remnant bush are forfeited to developers.

Similarly, it is through the work of such accomplished botanical artists as Ferdinand Bauer and Marion Westmacott that we know what a 'bridal flower' (*Solanum bauerianum* [Solanaceae]) looked like – an extinct plant named after Bauer, which once grew on Norfolk and Lord Howe Islands. Bauer sketched the plant when he visited Norfolk Island in 1804–5 but did not colour his drawing. Nearly 200 years later, in the absence of photographs or colour illustrations of this extinct plant in both flower and fruit, Westmacott, a contemporary botanical artist, relied on Bauer's code to colour the drawing and 'revive' the plant's full depiction.

By comparing the real colours of living plants in Western Australia with the numbers in Bauer's colour code, and studying his extant colour sketches of those plants, researchers were able to 'crack' Bauer's colour code in 2000. [13] Botanical art can crucially record the biodiversity of an earlier era that human activity has since depleted, and so help us appreciate what we are losing.

The discipline of botanical art is experiencing a revival as more artists (particularly women) again take up its challenges and rewards. As most artists work from nature, this field can take them to places where particular plants can be found, and it encourages an appreciation of their natural habitat. Examining a plant in order to draw it accurately, and in great detail, requires deep concentration – focusing on specific features but also becoming more cognisant of the ambient environment.

Part of botanical art's continuing appeal today is that it provides a refreshing counterpoint to the

dominance of the computer screen and the clock. Meanwhile its flourishing raises another question: Which cultural institutions today are collecting this art?



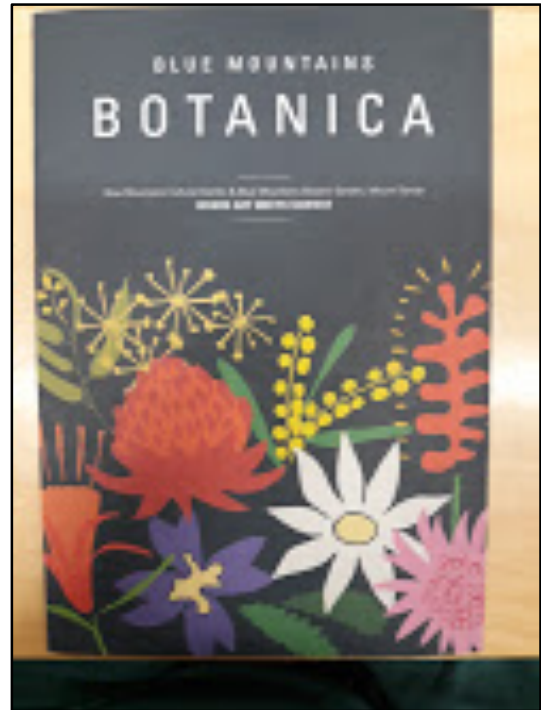
*Solanum bauerianum* (Solanaceae), by Marion Westmacott, c. 2004. Reproduced with artist's permission. Digital copy provided by the State Library of New South Wales.

Botanical art exhibitions are increasingly popular and prolific. In the past two years in the Sydney area alone, there have been exhibitions presented by Sydney Living Museums (at Customs House), the Australian Museum (Sydney), the State Library of New South Wales, The Royal Botanic Garden Sydney, and those already-mentioned in the Blue Mountains. [14] These exhibitions resonate with viewers when they allow the art to 'sing': about our natural heritage and how important it is to protect its bounty. There is still an appetite today for botanical art, however it is defined, and a need for it to remind us of the beauty and responsibility of living in and maintaining the natural world.

Text citation: Alison Wishart, 'Botanical art in Australian museums: Revival and relevance', *Museums and Galleries Australia Magazine*, Vol. 27(1), Museums and Galleries Australia, Canberra, Summer 2018, pp. 36-41

**Alison Wishart has worked as a curator or collection manager for 15 years. As a Senior Curator at the State**

**Library of New South Wales, she wrote the exhibition text for *Botanical Inspirations* in 2017.**



Graphic design for *Blue Mountains Botanica* exhibition at the Blue Mountains Cultural Centre, 2018.

#### Endnotes

1. *The banksias*, a three-volume collection of every banksia species in Australia, featuring Rosser's work: was published in Melbourne in 1981 by Monash University Press. You can see her original works by visiting her studio and gallery in Fish Creek, Victoria; see <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-05-02/botanical-artist-celia-rosser-banksia-collection/8475578>.
2. The review is available at: <https://visual.artshub.com.au/news-article/reviews/visual-arts/alison-wishart/review-blue-mountains-botanica-blue-mountains-cultural-centre-256417>.
3. Martyn Rix, *The Golden Age of Botanical Art*, London: Andre Deutsch, 2012, p. 14. Pedanios Dioscorides, a doctor who travelled with the Roman Army in the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE is thought to have written (in Greek) the text which appeared in *Aniciae Iulianae picturis illustratus, nunc Vindobonensis Medicus Graecus* in 512, a publication which is held in the Austrian National Library in Vienna.
4. For more information, see <https://paintingbynumbers.dxlabs.sl.nsw.gov.au/colour->

- [code/ferdinand-bauer>](#), and David J. Mabberley, *Painting by Numbers: the life and art of Ferdinand Bauer*, Sydney: New South Publishing, 2017, pp. 5–18.
5. See Leonie Norton, *Women of Flowers: Botanical art in Australia from the 1830s to the 1960s*, Canberra: National Library of Australia, 2009, pp. 2–3.
  6. See <<https://www.botanicalartsocietyaustralia.com/about/>>, (accessed 31 October 2018).
  7. Botanical Art Society of Australia, *Flora of Australia: A Botanical Art Worldwide Exhibition linking people to plants through botanical art*, presented by the Botanical Art Society of Australia, 2018.
  8. Caroline Berlyn and Anna Jug, *Close to Nature: May Gibbs and Australian Botanical Art*, room brochure for an exhibition at Carrick Hill, Adelaide, 2018.
  9. See <<https://www.rbg Syd.nsw.gov.au/science/botanical-illustration/the-margaret-flockton-award-2018/>>, (accessed 31 October 2018).
  10. See for example, the botanical art/illustrations in Janda Gooding, *Brush with Gondwana: The Botanical Artists Group Western Australia*, Fremantle: Fremantle Press, 2008
  11. Edith Pass works as a florist, (see <<http://www.floralink.com.au/about-floralink/>>), and Jennifer Leahy as a photographer (see <<http://www.silversalt.com.au/art#!/page/260878/about/>>); James Blackwell is a full-time artist ( see <<https://james-blackwell.com/about/>>) and Julie Nettleton specialises in ‘modern botanical art’ (see <<https://julienettleton.com/>>).
  12. David Mabberley regards the need to define botanical art as ‘fatuous, and likely snobbish, hair-splitting’, *Painting by Numbers*, p. 235.
  13. Mabberley, *Painting by Numbers*, p. 153.
  14. See <<https://sydneylivingmuseums.com.au/2016/07/06/botanical-art/>>; <<https://australianmuseum.net.au/event/scott-sisters-exhibition/>>; <<http://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/exhibitions/botanical-inspirations/>>; <<https://www.rbg Syd.nsw.gov.au/whatson/botanica/>>.

## Book Review

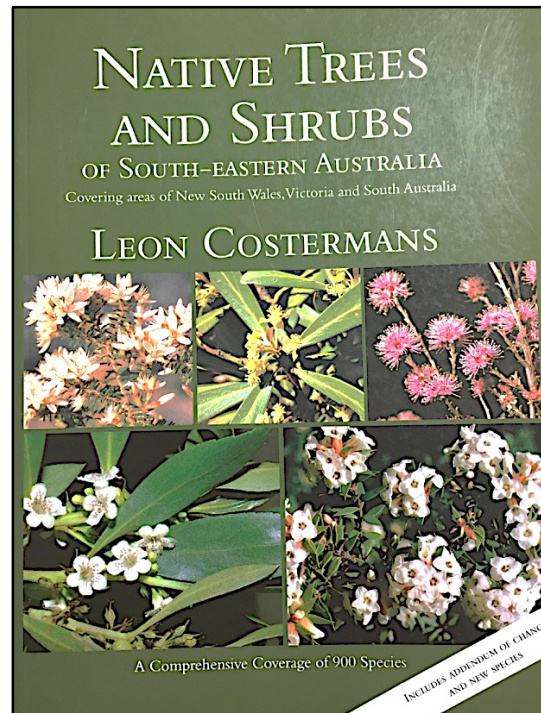
By Rosie Wade

***Native Trees and Shrubs of South-Eastern Australia***, by Leon Costermans.

For those of us who have been moved and inspired by last year’s Flora of Australia exhibition, or botanical art anywhere that reveals our own flora to us with new eyes, Leon Costermans’ book is a must-read. Costermans has been working as a botanist and botanical illustrator for many years, and is noted by the *Australia Encyclopaedia of Australian Science* for his work on the identification of eucalypts.

He is self-taught as an illustrator, and credits his mother with developing his interest. *Native trees and shrubs of south-eastern Australia*, was originally published in 1981. His latest version of this book, published in 2017, has an

addendum of nearly 20 pages, giving details of changes to the ways in which species are classified, as well as information on new species.



His illustrations are brilliant; clear, detailed line drawings offer information on the scale of plants he’s drawn and accompany maps giving an indication of natural growth habitats for each plant within south-eastern Australia, running, roughly, from north of Sydney to Port Augusta in South Australia. As well as detailed plant information, there is information on the geological and evolutionary history of south-eastern Australia, explaining simply how certain types of plants responded to their environment and how various geological processes shaped the land to make it more or less habitable for plants. I find it an invaluable reference for making the close study of plants which is central to scientific illustration, and I don’t feel I can do better than Costermans, himself:

“...we are seeing a new concern for the preservation of the remaining natural features of our country. However, it has been my experience that only a small percentage of the adult population has acquired any real knowledge and understanding of the ... vegetation (and) in particular, many people seem virtually blind to the endless variation in their natural surroundings, and the Australian bush is often seen as little more than ‘gum trees’”.

If our work as botanical artists is, in part, to help the viewer really SEE the exquisite variety of our native trees, plants and flowers, then Costermans' book is a really valuable aid to that end.

## Traveler's Tales

### Kangaroo Island - By Jane Pye

In September 2012, I made a long road trip that included a few days on Kangaroo Island. The population there is under 5000, scattered thinly over an island 145km long. The Flinders Chase National park, site of the Remarkable Rocks, lies at the Western end. This park had been largely destroyed by fire, five years before, but the forest had recovered well. Over a third of the island is under some level of habitat protection.

Morning iris (*Orthrosanthus multiflorus*) bloomed in great blue swathes in open spaces, carefully grazed around by the wallabies. Many of the roadsides are like wonderful gardens full of unfamiliar plants. In places the whole verge was full of the rare *Xanthorrhoea semiplana* (Tates grass trees) of soft blue grey, interspersed with hibbertias, blue conosperma, conesticks, saltbush, teatrees and thryptomene. Through gaps in the roadside vegetation we saw rolling green pastures with wooded gullies, with fat cattle and sheep.

A standout destination was Stokes Bay Garden. This had a wonderful range of native plants. The dryandras were particularly impressive and the collections of hakeas and banksias also excellent. There were colourful displays of annuals, winding paths, little clearings – tempting to spend all day there.

Kangaroo Island has a number of settlements, Kingscote being the capital. There are art galleries, restaurants, fine beaches and walking tracks. The island has been designated an Important Bird Area and has plenty of wildlife including koalas and sea lions. It has a peaceful, friendly feel, with everyone we met being helpful and cooperative. It was a memorable visit, one I'm very pleased to have made.



Headland vegetation on Kangaroo Island

## Sketchbook Stories

### *From Sketchbook to Bridal Gown – A story of imagination, skill and courage*

By Cathryn Coutts

I'm sure it's no secret that I am interested in botanical artists who push, or go beyond, the traditional boundaries to give us something new and wonderful to appreciate in their work. They provide us with visual delight, leave us in awe and wonder. They have something to say, a personal story to tell. Often they are not well known. When the opportunity arises, as Tendrils editor, I try to share their work with you.

One of these artists is Jacqueline Donovan, a member of the Bowral group BDAS Botanical Artists. Her work reveals her remarkable attributes as an artist. She combines technical skill at a high level, imagination and creativity, and above all, courage – that is courage to take risks, experiment and go in new directions.

This particular story of Jacqueline's work is about the evolution of an idea - from the first sketches, through meticulous planning and research, learning new skills, experimenting with designs and materials, modifying the design as required, to actually making a bridal gown. I

wonder how many of us could accomplish so much in our art work, at so many levels. Just the mention of making a bridal gown fills many with fear and trepidation. Not this artist.

Jacqueline explained to me that she has combined her painting and drawing work with textiles for some time, so for her this combination was not so unusual. It does however bring in a very personal connection because the gown was made for a family member. The design brief was for a simple elegant gown featuring designs based on Australian flowers, specifically wattles, waratahs and some Lyre Bird feathers.

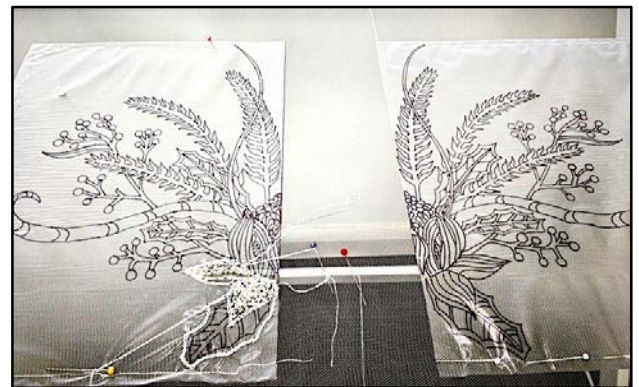
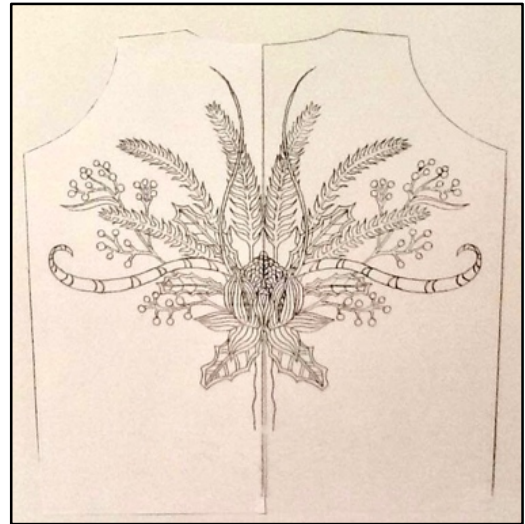
So like all good artists, Jacqueline started with sketches, including some of the bride-to-be in possible gown designs. The process of designing and making the gown is shown in the photos enclosed.

The drawings were first sketched on plain paper, then scanned onto the computer so that an accurate mirror reverse of the image could be made. From this the design was drawn onto tracing paper. So far these steps would be familiar to many of us, but then it gets a lot more complicated.



The design was transferred onto a water soluble, non-woven fabric stabiliser, used for embroidery and designed to rinse away after the work is finished. It looks a bit like a very fine tracing paper, only softer. I can only imagine the difficulty of drawing the design onto this material with a fine permanent marker pen,

because it behaves and feels more like fabric than paper and sort of stretches as you draw on it.



A type of tulle, called Illusion, was the support for the embroidered and beaded design for the back of the gown. Jacqueline stretched the Illusion fabric onto a Heddle loom to do the beading and embroidery. Once that was finished the pieces were then able to be sewn together to complete the gown. The beading is done in the Tambour technique, which originated in India in Ari work (ari means hook). The process involves using a hook rather than needle to attach the beads. It reached Europe by the 18<sup>th</sup> century where it became popular in haute couture

Jacqueline told me she has never done anything like this before and the process was not always smooth sailing. But the result, from the first botanical sketches through to the finished gown, is truly remarkable, especially because it was all undertaken by the same person. It is the combination of these ideas and skills along with the courage to carry it out, which puts this artist

in a class all her own. She travels to Italy shortly to attend the wedding and have a well-earned rest.



## Workshops and Events

### Susannah Blaxill Drawing and Painting Workshops.

The classes are for Intermediate to Advanced level students. As before, each workshop is limited to 6 students and will be held in my studio in Mittagong.

#### Workshop Details

The following classes are available:

#### Workshop 1: 2 Day Graphite & Ink drawing

Thursday 26 & Friday 27 September 2019

#### Workshop 2: 4 Day Painting Workshop

Saturday 28 to Tuesday 1 October 2019

#### Workshop 3: 2 Day Graphite & Ink drawing

Saturday 5 & Sunday 6 October 2019

#### Workshop 4: 4 Day Painting Workshop

Monday 7 to Thursday 10 October 2019

#### Costs:

2-day drawing Workshops \$398 (Deposit to secure your place \$200)

4-day Painting Workshops \$796 (Deposit to secure your place \$400)

### Further Information and Contact Details

If you have any enquiries or wish to enrol please contact me:

Mobile: 0409285261

Email: [sblaxill@hinet.net.au](mailto:sblaxill@hinet.net.au)

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

### Leonie Norton Workshop Hobart

Botaniko is hosting a workshop in Hobart from 28 November – 1 December 2019 inclusive – *Contemporary Botanical Art - Bigger and Better*, led by prominent Sydney art educator Leonie Norton. This unique workshop will allow participants to take a small subject/photo and create a large painting using a grid system.

This workshop offers an ideal opportunity to explore another dimension of botanical art, to observe and explore composition, colour, form, texture, light and tone to create a contemporary botanical painting.

If you would like further information please contact Janet Thompson ([jvcoghill@gmail.com](mailto:jvcoghill@gmail.com))

### NatureArt Lab (ACT)

Lots of options to choose from. You could learn to draw, paint with watercolour, or try botanical art or bird painting with watercolour with our wonderful team of in-house professional art tutors.

We also have two exciting coloured pencil workshops coming up, on insects and birds, with interstate tutors Janet Matthews and Jan Clark.

You could try botanical art on vellum with Diane Sutherland or graphite drawing and scaling of flowers with Polly Sutherland – both invited to Australia as guest tutors from the UK.

Welcome spring and see Floriade with a special watercolour workshop on painting tulips with Tanya Hoolihan – botanist and professional artist from Sydney. Western Australian artist Renata Wright is also visiting Canberra for a special peacock spider workshop.

Bookings at:

<https://natureartlab.com.au/>

**Introduction to Botanical Illustration, with Peter Wale.**

Saturday and Sunday 10-11 August. Held at Jervis Bay Maritime Museum and Gallery, Woollamia Road Huskisson NSW, open daily 10am to 4pm.

Workshop Cost: \$150 for two days, 10.30am to 3pm.

Bookings: [enquiries@jbmm.asn.au](mailto:enquiries@jbmm.asn.au) or call 02 44415675

**JERVIS BAY MARITIME MUSEUM**

**INTRODUCTION TO BOTANICAL ILLUSTRATION WITH PETER WALE**  
SATURDAY 10 & SUNDAY 11 AUGUST

Explore the beauty and satisfaction to be derived through drawing and painting nature. This class will familiarise you with both drawing and painting skills required to create your own botanical portraits.  
Suitable for beginners and those with some experience.

Cost: \$150 for two days, 10:30 - 3:00  
Book: [enquiries@jbmm.asn.au](mailto:enquiries@jbmm.asn.au) or call 4441 5675

Woollamia Rd  
Huskisson NSW  
Open Daily 10am - 4pm

**JERVIS BAY MARITIME MUSEUM & GALLERY**

**BASQ (Botanical Art Society of Queensland)**

**Art Folios and Handmade Books with Jan Houghton.** Friday & Saturday 19-20 July, from 9.30am to 4.30pm. Venue 31 Fernbourne Rd Wellington point.

Cost:

\$90 one day or \$180 two days (member)

\$110 one day or \$220 two days (non-member)

Register - forms available from:

<http://www.botanicalartqld.com.au/node/203>

Contact: [admin@botanicalartqld.com.au](mailto:admin@botanicalartqld.com.au)

**Drypoint Etching, with Kylie Stapleton.**

Saturday 24 & Sunday 25 August, 9.30am to 4.30pm.

Venue: Wynnum Manly Arts, Florence Street, Wynnum.

Cost: \$210 (member) \$250 (non-member)

(includes \$30 materials kit)

Register - forms available from:

<http://www.botanicalartqld.com.au/node/203>

Contact: [admin@botanicalartqld.com.au](mailto:admin@botanicalartqld.com.au)

**Websites**

This section draws readers' attention to any sites that are of interest to botanical artists. There are many of them.

So please, if you find an interesting site, send in the details to me so we can share them here.

Send them to: [cathryn.coutts@gmail.com](mailto:cathryn.coutts@gmail.com)

Here are a couple for this issue.

**Becklers Botanical Bounty**

The Flora of Menindee project, led by Mali Moir has a blog about their progress, especially in the last couple of years, with critical water shortages. This is a fascinating botanical art project. Read about it at:

[becklersbotanical.blogspot.com](http://becklersbotanical.blogspot.com)

**Botanical Art and Artists**

This is always a very interesting website with lots of information, about botanical art and for botanical artists.

In the light of our Artist Profile article this issue, about the late Margaret Stones, you might like to read more about her at this website.

<https://www.botanicalartandartists.com/news/rip-margaret-stones-and-jessica-tcherepnine>