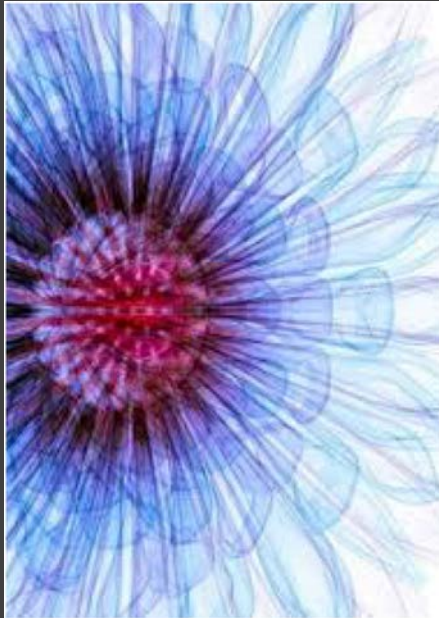


# Tendrils

Australian Botanic Artists Regional Network (ABARN)



Two Spectacular Digital Floral Images by Macoto Murayama

## News from Regional Groups

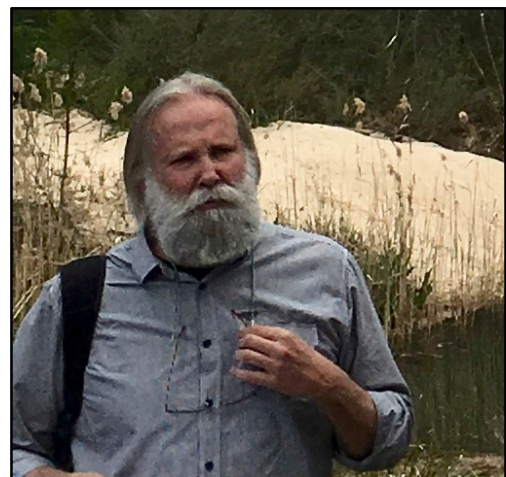
### NSW BDAS Botanic Artists

Our group continues to meet regularly each month at Bowral Gallery, with artists coming not only from our local area, but also from Sydney and Canberra as well.

Preparations are underway for our next big event in Bowral in 2018, the second *For the Love of Plants* exhibition and workshops.

On September 23, several of our members attended the Threatened Species Day bushwalk at Berrima River Reserve. The walk was led by ecologist Greg Stone, who gave a most interesting talk about the *Eucalyptus macarthurii* (Paddy's River Box) which occurs almost exclusively within Wingecarribee Shire and is listed as a threatened species.

Several of our artists have already painted this tree, with more images planned, because the focus of *For the Love of Plants* in 2018 is on rare and endangered plants from the Southern Highlands.



Greg Stone at Berrima River Reserve

## Queensland

### Mackay Botanical Art Interest Group

The group meets twice a month, and we have just completed our annual exhibition ‘Botanica 2017’ in the Lagoons Café at Mackay Regional Botanic Gardens. It was themed ‘useful plants’ which we found covers them all in some way. We printed the research we did on our plants as well.

One of the members has created a ‘book’ of the exhibition, which shows the information provided for each painting. Two examples by Thelma Farmer and Kate Brunner are shown below.

Next year’s exhibition will focus on the lagoon/wetland plants.



Thelma Farmer *Acronychia acidula* – Lemon Aspen

‘Lemon Aspen is a small to medium rainforest tree found in forests in Northern Queensland. It has flowers in small clusters from the leaf axil and the mature fruit is small (about 1.5 to 2.5cm) and round with a rough surface. The fruit contains several small black seeds in cavities within and is creamy in colour.

‘*Acidula*’ is Latin meaning acidic, so these berries have an acidic flavor, much like lemon or lime. Aborigines used it to flavour their dishes. The skin can be grated as you would a lemon, or the berries can be boiled in water to create a juice, which can be used in place of lemon juice.

Lemon Aspen is grown in small-scale commercial bush food orchards on the east coast of Australia from North Queensland to northern New South Wales’.



Kate Brunner  
*Passiflora aurantia* - Native Red Passion Flower *Acraea andromacha* – Glasswing Butterfly

‘For anybody who loves a large red flower, *Passiflora aurantia* is useful to people.

But Glasswing butterflies need it as host plant for their eggs and caterpillars. Though they lay eggs on other members of the passion fruit family, this one with relatively large soft foliage is a preferred one. When the butterflies emerge, people also enjoy shimmering flutter-bys amongst gorgeous flowers.

But there is a twist to this pretty scene... the plant has “extra floral nectarines” (on the leaves, leaf stalk and below the flower), from these it dispenses small sweet drops to ants. They in turn collect butterfly eggs and small caterpillars to prevent them eating the leaves, thus the ants and plant are useful to each other.

The fruit is not very tasty to people but some birds eat them and spread the seeds’.

Many thanks to Pamela Finger for this information.

### Botanical Art Society of Queensland

Regrettably this newsletter will be sent out too late for people to visit the BASQ Floressence 2017 exhibition, which closed on 20 November. The BASQ website, however, has information and a short video of the 2016 exhibition available on the site.

**Banks and Solander 2020:** BASQ is planning a big exhibition in 2020 of plants collected by Joseph and Daniel Solander, due to commence on 20 May. Images are to be selected from a species list sent to members.

A lot is happening with BASQ in 2018, so for more information go to their website:

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

## South Australia

### Mt Gambier

One of our *Tendrils* readers in Mt Gambier is Jenni Elmes. In October this year she exhibited a picture in the *Reframing Nature 2017* exhibition presented by the Friends of the Royal Botanic Gardens in Melbourne. Jenni has included an image for this issue.



Jenni Elmes *Dacelo novaeguineae*

This exhibition is on every second year and next year will be *The Art of Botanical Illustration*, at the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne. Something to look out for in the new year.

Jenni writes: “Thank you so much for the September issue of your botanic art newsletter. I was happy to see botanic artists from Tasmania have been noticed for their work.” Thanks Jenni for those kind words. We love to hear the news from all our readers.

## Exhibitions

### Current and Future Exhibitions

#### Blue Mountains Botanic Garden Mt. Tomah

**Habitat.** At the Visitor Centre, from 16 December to 25 February 2018.

This is an exhibition of the work of Annette Minchin, who explores the fragility of the landscape, such as red river gums, from her studio at Lake Menindee, using a variety of media and found materials. Worth a look, and

the garden itself is always wonderful to see. Great coffee is available at the café while you enjoy breathtaking views.

**State Library of NSW *Botanical Inspirations*.** On now until 28 January 2018.

This exhibition features a selection of botanical drawings, maps and rare books related to the work of Ferdinand Bauer, the renowned artist who travelled with Matthew Flinders on the circumnavigation of Australia starting in 1801. A ‘must see’ for all lovers of Australian plants and botanical illustration.



**Art Gallery of NSW *Rembrandt and the Dutch Golden Age: Masterpieces from the Rijksmuseum*.** On now until 18 February, 2018.



**Canberra Museum and Gallery. *Eirene Mort: A Livelihood.*** On now until 25 February 2018.

This exhibition shows the work of a remarkable but lesser known artist, printmaker, craftswoman and teacher working in Australia in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Her work reflects the blossoming Arts and Crafts Movement in Sydney and was noted for its high quality and originality of design. She was a member of the Society of Arts and Crafts in NSW and played a key role in anticipating the profession of interior designer.

**Bungendore Fine Art**

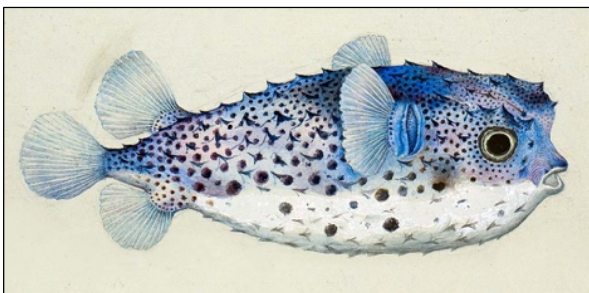
*Two Visions*, featuring the work of Leslie Wallington and Doreen Shaw. Currently showing during December 2017 and January 2018.



**Exhibition Reviews**

*The Art of Science: Baudin's Voyages 1800-1804.* Coming to National Museum of Australia, Canberra, March 15 to June 11 2018.

The exhibition showcased some beautiful watercolours of birds, marine animals, insects and plants. There were also some very sensitively rendered portraits of Aboriginal people as well as profiles of the Australian coastline.



*Poisson Diodon* (porcupine fish) by Charles-Alexandre Lesueur

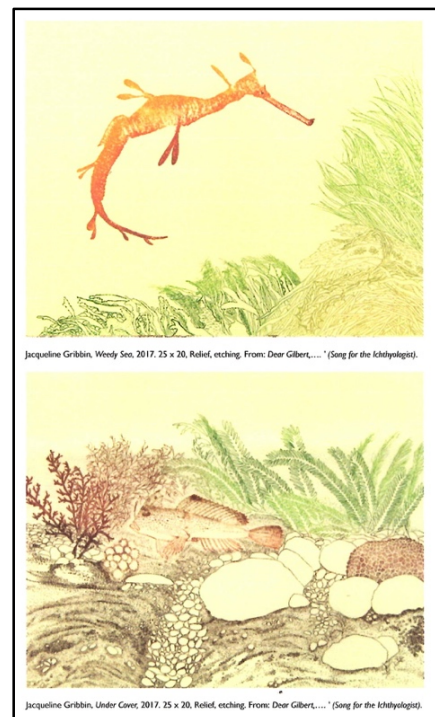
Although there were only a few images of plants, the other works made up for it. I was reminded of how little I know about the French expeditions to explore Australia. The watercolours on vellum, by Charles-Alexandre Lesueur, were just as fresh and exquisite and when they were first painted. If you can get to see this exhibition in Canberra it's worth a visit.

**The Cross Art Projects, Sydney.**

*Dear Gilbert ... Song for the Ichthyologist*

Jacqueline Gribbin is a Darwin printmaker whose series of etchings are inspired by the work of Gilbert Percy Whitley (Ichthyologist and Curator of Fishes, Australian Museum, 1922 to 1964). She acquired a series of old letterpress blocks which were from a collection dedicated to his work. Her etchings derive from research into Whitley's work and are a lovely example of an artist being inspired by a scientist. The artist uses hand colouring with a very delicate touch and the resulting work is a lovely combination of historical, scientific and artistic elements.

Although this exhibition is finished, the images can be found on the web, by searching for the artist and the gallery.



Two etchings by Jacqueline Gribbin

## Looking Back & Looking Forward

### Botanic Art, Cameras and Technology.

I have been thinking for some time about the role that reprographic technologies, cameras and electronic and digital media play in our work as botanic artists. As a printmaker this is not surprising, given that I make my images in multiples.

I decided that in this issue's 'Looking Back and Looking Forward' section I would like to share my thoughts on these matters and invite readers to send in their ideas and comments about how these technologies impact on their work, so we can publish them in future issues.

It is relevant here because we can both look back, and look forward, to see the importance of using technologies to make images of plants. That's what makes it so fascinating.

Two things are important to note. Humans have been making images of plants for as far back as we can look at civilizations around the world. And whenever possible, people have found ways to make multiple images. The urge to make more than one copy of an image is both pragmatic and powerful, serving to meet scientific, cultural, social, economic or religious purposes.

I have included some examples.



Heinrich Fullmaurer *Asparagus officinalis*, 1542

Coloured Woodcut

This woodcut comes from *De stirpium historia*, by Leonhart Fuchs, one of three books published within two years, that changed the course of science. Published in 1542 at a time when new developments in science were occurring, this work was the first modern herbal with long-lasting impact. It is remarkable because of the quality of its woodcuts – which mark the beginning of printed plant illustrations that are true to nature, and also because it even includes portraits of the artists at work.

In the early days of making the first printed books, woodcuts were used to create illustrations such as this one. Other methods used before photography was invented in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century were copper engraving, etching and lithography, all of which often involved some hand colouring. Each of these has given us some magnificent plant images that still delight us today.

When the first photographic images began to appear, i.e. those using light and light sensitive surfaces, plants were some of the very first subjects. This may have been both because plants were convenient to lay on a surface and also because of their inherent attractiveness to us. Here are some examples of these early images.



The one on the left is a Photogenic drawing of leaves and flowers of wild geranium, c.1839, by William Henry Fox Talbot. The right-hand side image is another of his, a 'photoglyphic engraving' of wheat stalks.

Fox Talbot was a member of that 19<sup>th</sup> century English species, the 'gentleman-scientist'. He was not a trained artist, but made some very significant experiments in the early development of photography.

While the camera obscura had been used for centuries, dating as far back as Roman times, and

knowledge about lenses, light and the chemistry of light sensitive materials was available, it was the means to capture and fix the image, putting it altogether as it were, that remained elusive.

Fox Talbot's efforts to capture and fix his images consisted of coating superfine writing paper with silver nitrate or silver chloride, placing plants on this surface and exposing it to light. Using this method he was able to obtain images of plants.

A little later, in 1853, these beautiful 'cyanotype' images below were created by Anna Atkins, whose introduction to photography arose from her acquaintance with both Fox Talbot and Sir John Herschel. Fox Talbot taught her the calotype and 'photogenic drawing' techniques he had developed and from Herschel she learned how to produce 'blueprints' using insoluble Prussian blue dye. Atkins became a pioneer of the cyanotype method, photographing algae and plants. The algae were placed on cyanotype light-sensitive paper and then exposed to light, creating a negative shadow image. She produced three volumes of *Photographs of British Algae: Cyanotype Impressions* (1843-53). I find these images strikingly beautiful.



I will skip over the subsequent developments in photography and reprographic processes that emerged in the intervening years up to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. But I encourage you to go and look for yourselves, because there is a wealth of wonderful images to enjoy through the history of photography up to our present digital age.

To conclude this article, I would first like to show works that suggest the directions in which botanic art might be heading. One thing is

certain. Technology will not stand still, and artists will continue to experiment with new ways to create their work.

But first a piece from 1896, which remarkably looks forward to our present era.



This is by Charles Remy and Gaston Contremoulins. It is a radiograph of chrysanthemum flower heads, and marks a significant moment in botanical art and science. It was taken very shortly after the discovery of X-rays in 1895, and is one of the earliest examples of applying the new technology to a plant. In the process, the artists use cutting edge science to make an exquisitely beautiful image.

Come forward to 2010, and we can enjoy the work of Bryan Whitney in his pigment print *Bird's Nest Fern*, an image of superb elegance and aesthetic power.



Finally, I encourage you to think about how you use photography and digital media in your own botanic art work. These media can offer us a range of possibilities. They can be used to produce images themselves, as we have seen in

the examples shown, or they can be used as a tool to enhance hand produced work.

As an enhancing element, the digital media provide a stimulus, an added dimension, a valuable record of contact with a plant. At times a photo can be the *only* permanent record we have at our disposal, from which to make a painting. Photos can greatly enhance our ways of seeing, conceptualizing and understanding a plant. They also are a great for tool for composition.

At the same time, however, if one is not careful, they can severely limit the *way we see and what we see*. Photos often give no clues and to what is really 'going on' with the plant specimen we are looking at.

I therefore urge botanic artists to be aware of these contradictory, but key forces at work. As Patricia Negus explains in her book (Jane Scott & Patricia Negus, *Wildflowers of Southwest Australia – Augusta-Margaret Region*) direct contact and observation of the specimen is essential to bring into focus all parts of the plant necessary for identification.

The latest newsletter from BASQ (see page 5) has a very useful and succinct definition of Botanical Art and Illustration. It notes that the 19<sup>th</sup> century conventions were established when botany became recognized as a legitimate science. Botanical art was established as a genre to differentiate it from flower painting. Although these conventions have served us well since then, many discussions continue among artists about where the boundaries between the genres can be drawn.

This discussion is constantly driven forwards by new image making approaches used by botanic artists, including photographic and digital processes. We live in interesting times, as they say!

**By Cathryn Coutts**

**References:**

*Plant: Exploring the Botanical World*. Phaidon Press, 2016.

*The Camera and its Images*. A Goldsmith. 1979

*The Birth of Photography*. Brian Coe. 1977

## **Artist's Profile**

### **Chris Weldon**

I must firstly say after stressing out about writing about myself and Cathy saying 'it only has to be a paragraph', I thought before I start I will just look at who was in the last newsletter, and OMG it's dear Rosie, she has written this amazing story. Well what do I write? So here goes!

I was born in England and lived in Berlin in my early twenties. After my return to the UK in the early 70's I decided to venture across the world to see my sister and have stayed and loved Australia from the very first day.



I am one of eight siblings who are all really artistic in different ways - graphic designers, art teachers, textile artists and so it goes on, and then there is me. Accounting took me into a corporate world of finance sitting on the board of directors for several years. Well there is nothing creative in that, so in my mid-forties I decided to take art lessons which led me in a completely different direction.

I left the corporate world in Perth and returned to NSW to start a new life and set up a tea house and art gallery in Camden, with my sister Jacque. We both loved the arts but knew nothing about running a teahouse/restaurant. We had over two years of absolute hard work but loads of fun and laughter and we have a multitude of funny stories we could tell, hence the name of our tea

house *Gigglepots*. I am sure we will share these stories with you all one day.

Like all of us, I loved flowers and gardening, but my passion was colour. Like many of us I did the rounds, patchwork, ribbon embroidery, jewellery making and the list goes on. I had been dabbling in all mediums of art and not really finding my thing.

I moved to Bathurst to help my husband run his Hearing clinics, which gave me the opportunity to paint with a group of artists and attend the winter and summer schools at the university, which I loved. Then my life was turned upside down. We sold our business and retired, my mum passed away and I lost two of my very closest friends all in a week. Jacque (sister) had found a new love and had gone to live in France, so I knew I had to find something to fill my life and recover from the loss.

We moved back to Camden and I joined a watercolour art group in Camden doing scenery and still life. Every week my teacher would say 'too much detail and not enough background', so I struggled on, not quite knowing where I was going.

Until one day on my way over the mountains I happened to come across a little gallery in a beautiful garden, so I ventured in and there was Elaine Musgrave sitting in this peaceful studio painting away. Well I knew in minutes this is what I want to do, no backgrounds and loads of detail. At the time she was not teaching, so I bought a print and from that day on the passion set in, and the picture still hangs in my bedroom. I just loved her work.



I was now retired and had more time to paint, but it was actually the learning that had become the obsession. I was seeing the world with different eyes after spending many years sitting at a desk number crunching. I was now sitting at a desk painting. It was amazing and the best meditation I could have wished for.

I was lucky enough to have a year at the Botanical Gardens with Barbara Duckworth and then a year at the Royal Society of Arts in Sydney. I completed the Leonie Norton Botanical Course and spent about five years just going to workshops around Australia and learning as much as I could.

I have been lucky enough to have painted with most of our masters of botanical painting, which has been a wonderful journey. My challenge was to be accepted into Botanica within 5 years, so I painted every day and spent many hours drawing. I enjoyed every moment, it has been an amazing experience. I finally made Botanica in 2015 and sold all my paintings. I could hardly believe it. It's such a joy when you put your heart and soul into a painting and somebody loves it enough to want to put it on their wall.

As Rosie said 'its definitely a love affair'.





## Talking about Botanic Art

By Margaret Botticchio

### Botanic Art and Creativity

I am endeavoring to write basically an invitation for our group to engage with the conversation about creativity in the context of botanical art. I see every one contributing but not necessarily in the same way.

Having studied Creativity, when Cathryn put forward the idea of articles for *Tendrils* on the subject of Creativity that would be of interest to botanical artists, I recalled a very naturally occurring conversation we botanic artists had at our July meeting. On this occasion the subject proved very engaging and I listened with great interest to the varied approaches put forward with passion and commitment from all present. Specifically, we covered how we came to Botanical Art and how we negotiate the extremes of a scientific basis and the urge towards creative expression.

At our last exhibition, we as a group of botanical artists came together with a common interest summed up with the title “For the Love of Plants”. Now as we approach our next exhibition it is timely to have more of these conversations which explore in depth what we are about, both individually and collectively. After all conversations about our own creativity capture the very prized diversity contained within this group.

I urge you all to take part in this conversation in whatever way you wish.

## Book Review

By Jane Pye

### *Botany for the Artist* by Sarah Simblet

Despite the title, this is not a botany text book, rather an “Inspirational Guide to Drawing Plants”, which is the subtitle. The author is a writer and lecturer who teaches drawing at the National Gallery, London, and at Oxford University. Her drawings are throughout the book together with beautiful photographs by

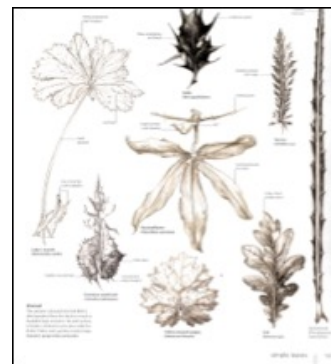
Sam Scott-Hunter which are intense and powerful. Botanical Advisor is Stephen Harris, Curator of the Oxford University Herbaria. Together they have produced a very fine book.



There are chapters on the Art of botany, Drawing plants, Diversity, Roots, Stems, Leaves, Flowers, and Fruit, Cones and Seeds. Each section includes many drawings and photographs of the huge variety of shapes and arrangements that often test the artist. There is information on materials and colour mixing, but the main art thrust is drawing, with illustrations being loose and full of personality. The glossary covers everything an artist needs to know. Throughout the book there are drawing classes with notes on changing perspective and texture, adding tone and depth, and master classes taken from works by Leonardo da Vinci, John Ruskin, Ferdinand Bauer, Albrecht Durer and others.

Any would-be botanical artist can only benefit from an understanding of the structure of flowers, leaf venation, stem branching, and arrangements of seeds and many other topics. This information is set out clearly and enticingly in this book.

Published by DK (Dorling Kimberly) in 2010, ISBN 978 1 4053 3227 9



## Traveler's Tales (New Section)

By Cathryn Coutts

In this new section our readers are invited to send in tales of places they have visited that would be of interest to us as botanic artists and plant lovers. Here is my contribution.

My recent trip to Western Australia and South Australia provided many memorable experiences. Two of these, however, stand out for me, and I encourage others to visit these places if you get the opportunity.

The first concerns a person as well as a place. While in Kings Park in Perth I bought the beautiful book by Jane Scott and Patricia Negus, *Wildflowers of Southwest Australia – Augusta-Margaret Region*. Jane Scott is a botanist who over three years, collected and described plants of the Augusta-Margaret River region for the Western Australian Regional Herbarium project, while Patricia Negus captured the plant details in watercolour (see below).



While in Margaret River I discovered that Patricia Negus had her studio nearby and I went to visit it. She is without doubt one of Australia's most outstanding botanic artists. Her work output has been monumental, with almost 500 plants illustrated for this book alone. Her interests range from painting wildflowers to illustrating children's books, gardening and woodwork. On site at her property called *Swallows Welcome* visitors are able to see the

*Chapel of the Flowers* (pictured) a rustic mudbrick and timber chapel containing the original paintings for the book.



Inside the Chapel of the Flowers

To be able to view the collection of paintings from the book is awe inspiring, to say the least, but meeting Patricia herself was really the best part. She was most welcoming, charming and happy to show me around the site, as well as talking in detail about her work and the techniques used in her paintings.

She has written about her work in the introduction to the book, but it was very special to be able to talk directly to the artist herself. One key aspect she discussed in the book relates to the use of photographs in plant identification. Here is a quote from the book:

'We all know how wondrously beautiful photographs can be. But the advantage of a painting is that I can bring into focus all the parts of the plant that are needed for its identification: buds, flowers, fruits, leaves etc.... Painting also allows me to group related plants on a page, and intertwine them with one another. I have also included many enlargements of small parts of the plant that I have found interesting, but which one cannot see clearly with the naked eye. ... I painted every illustration in this book from actual specimens. I used no photos.'

Patricia graciously agreed to have her photo taken with me, and included one of her lovely dogs. I felt very honored to meet such a remarkable artist.



Me with Patricia Negus at Swallows Welcome

### **AALBG Port Augusta**

The second stand-out experience was my visit to the Australian Arid Lands Botanic Garden (AALBG) in Port Augusta. I came across this quite by accident as we were driving back east through South Australia. I had been observing and sketching plants as I travelled across the Nullabor for the previous four days, and marveled at the resilience of nature to survive under such harsh conditions.

This garden, however, opened my eyes to the wonders of plants from arid environments, and how beautiful they can be.

The AALBG at Port Augusta was established in 1993 to research, conserve and promote a wider appreciation of Australia's arid zone flora. The garden has spectacular views to the Flinders Ranges as its backdrop. It showcases a diverse collection of arid zone habitats in a picturesque setting of over 250 hectares.

This is a truly amazing place to visit for those planning a trip to the area. Botanic artists would be spoiled for choice, to say the least, by the glorious collection of flowering eucalypts. I have included just one picture to give you a taste. Do go if you can, you won't be disappointed!



*Eucalyptus youngiana* (Ooldea Mallee) in AALBG Port Augusta

### **Workshops and Events**

#### **Susannah Blaxill's Autumn Drawing and Painting Workshops in the Southern Highlands of NSW, March 2018**

Mittagong in the Southern Highlands of New South Wales is very beautiful in the Autumn, and what better time to enjoy drawing and painting Autumn produce and flowers. Students will be shown how to develop their skills and polish their techniques in both Painting and Drawing.

2 Day Drawing Workshop: Friday 9<sup>th</sup> March and Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> March, 2018

4 Day Painting Workshop: Monday 12<sup>th</sup> to Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> March, 2018

2 Day Drawing Workshop: Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> and Monday 19<sup>th</sup> March, 2018

4 Day Painting Workshop: Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> to Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> March, 2018

**Contact details:** [www.blaxill.com](http://www.blaxill.com)

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

**Mobile:** 0409 285 261

**PO Box 2672**

**Bowral, NSW, 2576, Australia**

## Websites

The Japanese Association of Botanical Illustration is an interesting site worth visiting. It can be found at: [www.art-hana.com/english/](http://www.art-hana.com/english/)

Alternatively you can find it through the American Society of Botanical Artists at:

[www.asba-art.org/article/japanese-association-botanical-illustration](http://www.asba-art.org/article/japanese-association-botanical-illustration)

## BDAS Botanic Artists Meetings in 2018

Term 1: February 12, March 12, April 16

Term 2: May 21, June 18

Term 3: July 16, August 20, September 17

Term 4: October 22, November 19, December 3

## 2018 Dates of *For The Love of Plants* exhibition and workshops are as follows:

Oct. 17, 18 receive entries and set up exhibition

Gallery open to public 19-30 Oct., from 10am to 4pm daily.

Official opening Sat. 20 Oct. at 4pm.

Workshops will be held on both weekends during the exhibition. More details to follow next year.

## Publication Deadlines & Contact Details

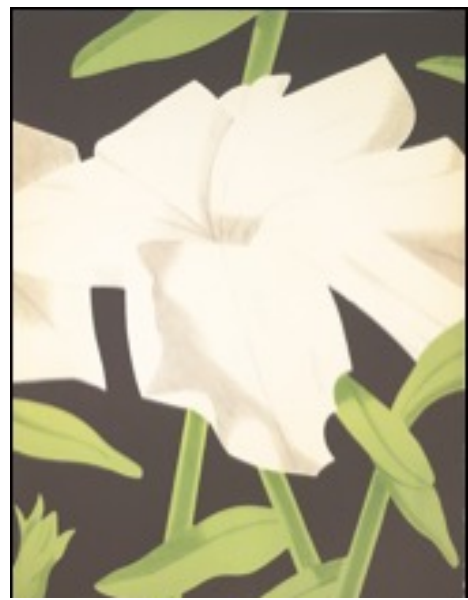
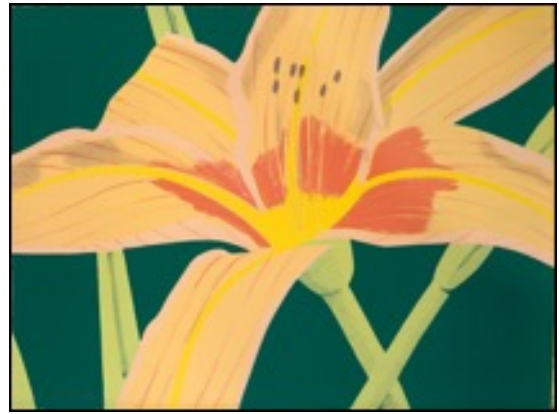
This newsletter was prepared by Cathryn Coutts. Next issue to be published in March 2018.

Contributions are most welcome and can be as brief as you like. They should be sent to me by February 23, 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, so let us know what's happening in your region.

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



These three works are by the American artist Alex Katz, who was born in Brooklyn New York in 1927 and has had a long and productive career. His distinctive hard-edge pop art style offers yet another approach to painting plants.