

Tendrils

Australian Botanical Artists Regional Network (ABARN)



Some local NSW Southern Highlands wattles: (L-R) *Acacia jonesii*, *Acacia dorothea* (both uncommon) & *Acacia melanoxylon*

News from Regional Groups

NSW

BDAS Botanic Artists

by Cathryn Coutts

The second *For The Love of Plants* exhibition and workshops event was held this year at Bowral Art Gallery, from October 19-30. Five workshops were held over the two weekends. We thank tutors, Helen Fitzgerald, Susannah Blaxill, Rita Parkinson, Peter Wale and Jacqueline Donovan for their expert tuition, patience and encouragement of the students.

There were 86 paintings in the exhibition, and sales of works were pleasing. Gallery visitors were also keen to buy the Botanical Art Society of Australia (BASA) publication, *Flora of Australia*, showing Australian paintings from the Botanical Art Worldwide Exhibition in May 2018. Copies are still available from BASA.

Nine paintings for our Florilegium of Threatened Species of the NSW Southern Highlands, were featured in the exhibition and generated much public interest.

Lauren Hook from the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage officially opened the exhibition.



Lauren Hook at the exhibition opening

We thank Lauren for her support. In her opening remarks, she also thanked many local groups on

our behalf, for their support of the project, including: local landowners, Wingecarribee Shire Council staff, bush-care volunteers, Australian Plant Society Southern Highlands group, local experts, field naturalists and NSW National Parks and Wildlife staff.

Visitors commented that it was a powerful and thought-provoking experience to see the paintings of the individual plants (some of which are very small in life size) displayed as a group. Plants shown in the collection included: *Corunastylis plumosum* (*Genoplesium plumosum*); *Mirbelia platyloboides*; *Persoonia glaucescens*; *Acacia pubescens*; *Eucalyptus aquatica*; *Eucalyptus apiculata*; *Eucalyptus macarthurii*; *Pterostylis pulchella* (syn. *Diplodium pulchellum*); *Eucalyptus benthamii*.

The Florilegium will continue in the coming years, with the list revised to include plants which are endangered, threatened, uncommon, or 'of local interest'.



Florilegium Pictures

Workshop tutors and students are shown in the following pictures.



Helen Fitzgerald *Birds in Botanicals*



Susannah Blaxill *Graphite and Ink Drawing*



Rita Parkinson *The Art of the Sketch*



Peter Wale *The Art of Coloured Pencils*



Jacqueline Donovan *Botanical Drawing*

For details about BDAS Botanic Artists contact Rosie Wade at: bdasbotanicartists17@gmail.com

Queensland

For the information of *Tendrils* readers living in Queensland or travelling there, a number of regional groups of botanical artists meet around the state. They include:

Gympie Botanical Art group – meets Tuesdays 1-4pm at the Gympie Regional Gallery. Contact Jan Tabler at: tabler.jan@gmail.com for details.

Mackay Botanical Art Interest Group - meets at Mackay Regional Botanic Gardens twice a month. Contact Madge Barnett at: madge.barnett@bigpond.com for details.

Noosa Botanical Art Group – meets at Wallace House, Noosaville on Monday afternoon 1-4pm. Contact Pauline Putland on (07) 54499223.

Sunshine Coast Art Group – offers workshops. Contact Nita Lester at: nita.c.lester@gmail.com for details.

Tablelands to Downs Group – meets at different places/homes each time and sometimes at Stanthorpe Art Gallery, from 10am to 3pm on the fourth Thursday of the month. Contact Nola Sindel at ashnol@skymesh.com.au for details.

Tamborine Mountain Botanical Art Group – allied to Tamborine Mountain Creative Arts Inc., this group meets for three-hour sessions twice a month. Contact Cassandra Hodgins at: quiescence@bigpond.com or Helen Lynch at: gerry_helen@bigpond.com

The Artists – Botanic Garden Tanawha – meets at Maroochy Bushland Botanic Gardens, Tanawha – workshops available. Contact Nita Lester at: nita.c.lester@gmail.com for details.

For more information go to the Botanical Art Society of Queensland (BASQ) website:

www.botanicalartqld.com.au

Tasmania

By Jean Henley

Jenny Phillips Workshop

We were fortunate to have Jenny Phillips return to Hobart in October to conduct a week-long botanical workshop hosted by Botaniko. We are prone to drawing and painting moderately sized specimens but Jenny took participants to the extreme having us draw and then paint large

leaves – firstly the large perforated leaves of *Monstera deliciosa* followed by arum lily leaves. It was a wonderful week with amazing results.



Jenny Phillips giving a demonstration

Exhibition - *Collecting Women* by Chantale Delrue

Chantale Delrue, a member of Botaniko, has throughout the year been working towards her exhibition *Collecting Women*, exhibited in the various rooms of the historic Rosny Cottage, on Hobart's Eastern Shore from 16 November to 9 December 2018. Drawing on her fascination for medicinal herbs, inherited from her mother, Chantale combined drawing, painting and textile works to delve into the historical stories of women collecting herbs, botanising and doing embroidery.

The photo below illustrates three elements of Chantale's work – the framed illustration of the embroidered heart combined with drawings of herbs containing medicinal properties for good heart health. Next, are the embroidered cushions and the plant-dyed bed cover.

Chantale kindly gave members of Botaniko a guided tour of the exhibition which formed part of the domestic atmosphere of the 1850s cottage.



Chantale's exhibition

Western Australia

by Margaret Pieroni

An exhibition by some of the state's finest botanical artists will be held in Albany WA, next year to coincide with the Australian Native Plants Societies' conference. Wildflower enthusiasts are expected from interstate and overseas.

TRUE TO NATURE – A Celebration of Western Australia's Wildflowers will be held in the Pop-up Gallery of the Museum of the Great Southern, Residency Rd., Albany from 28th September to 4th October, opening from 10 am to 4 pm, daily.

Artists include: Maxine Holman, Penny Leech, Philippa Nikulinsky, Margaret Pieroni and Katrina Syme.



Banksia seminuda (A.S. George) Rye by Margaret Pieroni

ACT

An exciting line up of events and workshops are being held in Canberra next year with **NatureArt Lab**.

One of the workshops is with Mali Moir – *Botanical Art and Collecting for Herbaria Workshop*, from 15-18 January 2019. This workshop invites participants to a four-day introduction to field collecting and illustration.

Two other workshops will be held in April and May. They are *NatureArt in Borneo: Artists and Nature Lovers*, and *NatureArt in Borneo: Nature Photography*.

You can find more details in the **Workshops and Events** section of this newsletter (p12).

Exhibitions

Current and Future Exhibitions

National Library of Australia, Canberra. *Cook and the Pacific*. From 22 September 2018 to 10 February 2019, 10am to 5pm.

Visitors to *Cook and the Pacific* will follow James Cook's three remarkable Pacific voyages, and explore this spectacular region through the eyes of the British voyagers and the First Nations peoples they met.

The exhibition takes visitors on a journey to the Pacific 250 years ago, with destinations including Tahiti, New Zealand, the east coast of Australia, Hawaii and even Siberia.

With content drawn from around the world, visitors will be enthralled by maps, manuscripts, rare books, large oil paintings, delicate watercolours by voyage artists, medallions, cartoons and poetry.

Australian National Botanic Gardens, Visitor Centre. The Friends' Botanic Art Groups 12th Annual Exhibition: 'more than just a pretty plant'. On from 16 March to 14 April 2019, open daily 9.30am – 4.30pm.

The Calyx, Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney. *Plants with Bite*. On from 1 October 2018. More than 10,000 carnivorous plants are on display. The exhibition hopes to educate visitors on plants' evolution, with interpretations based on five types of traps that plants have evolved to catch prey. Promises to be a fascinating display of this group of plants, for botanical artists.

Margaret Flockton Award 2019 – call for entries. Artists are invited to enter the 2019 Margaret Flockton Award for Excellence in Scientific Botanical Illustration. For more information to enter contact: Catherine Waudrop or Lesley Elkan by email at:

botanical.illustration@rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au

The exhibition will be held at the Royal Botanic Garden Sydney from 30 March to 14 April 2019.

Exhibition Reviews

By Jane Pye

Blue Mountains Botanica Exhibition, Katoomba NSW, 25 August – 14 October 2018.

This gem of an exhibition was held in the fine Katoomba Cultural Centre. It drew on the long tradition exploring the vegetation and topography of the Blue Mountains and it reflected the historical aspects of this interest.

There was a display of very early herbarium specimens entirely recognizable after 200 years. Early botanical illustrations by colonial artists were included. Also featured were biographical displays about people who encouraged early interest in plants, that is now expressed in conservation and propagation of native plants. Works of art of various kinds including photography and installations, and lovely botanical paintings by Angela Lober and Julie Nettleton, were on show.

As part of Botanica, 'Mycorrhizal Futurae - Ferox -Inferius' recorded the efforts made by artist Freedom Wilson, and ecologist Anna Murphy, to find and illustrate the rare Buttercup doubletail orchid. An ongoing study will examine the orchid ecology and the plant's role in its environment.

Blue Mountains Botanica was developed by the Royal Botanic Gardens and Domain Trust drawing on material from the Daniel Solander Library, the Mt Tomah Botanic Garden and the National Herbarium.

Looking Back and Looking Forward

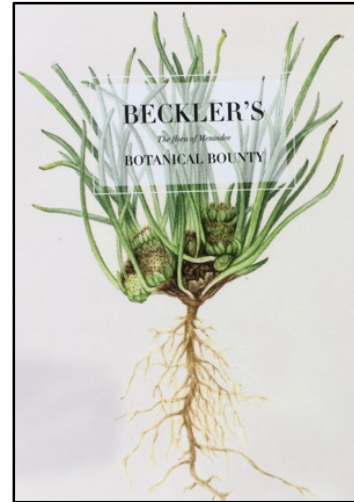
By Cathryn Coutts

As botanical artists, we know that our art form has a centuries-long tradition. This section of *Tendrils* seeks to celebrate that tradition, discover what we can learn from it and explore how contemporary artists are inspired by the past while creating new forms of botanical art.

The traditions have been very diverse, with images of plants created for a rich variety of purposes. During the last couple of centuries, European interest and exploration of the new

world, and an increase in scientific research, have been key reasons for the creation of plant images, including Australian native plants.

In May this year, I had the pleasure of visiting the Art Gallery of Ballarat, to see the exhibition *Beckler's Botanical Bounty: The Flora of Menindee*.



Exhibition Catalogue, Art Gallery of Ballarat

I had recently read two key books about the Victorian Exploring Expedition (VEE) commonly known as the Burke and Wills expedition. One was *Burke and Wills: The Triumph and Tragedy of Australia's Most Famous Explorers*, by Peter Fitzsimons, and the other was *Burke and Wills: The Scientific Legacy of the Victorian Exploring Expedition*, Edited by E.B. Joyce and D. A. McCann.

While the VEE's tragic story has captured the public interest for over 150 years, much less attention has been given to the scientific and artistic contributions that members of the expedition made.

In the two books mentioned above, I read about Hermann Beckler, expedition doctor and botanical collector, and Ludwig Becker, the expedition's artist. Both these men left a wonderful legacy in the form of plant collections and images of plants, animals and the landscape they encountered on their journey.

One can only imagine, as an artist, the challenges faced by Becker, as he produced the beautiful drawings and paintings of what he saw along the way. It is all the more poignant that although he was considered by Burke to be unnecessary to

the expedition, and he was ridiculed by expedition members for his lack of physical fitness, this man continued his artistic work right up until his death on the journey.

The work of these men is once again brought to our attention, through a project led by Mali Moir. In the exhibition catalogue (p.12) she explains that the project aims to locate, preserve and illustrate the same plants that Beckler collected in Menindee, where he and the artist Becker spent several months. She states, 'the project was initially inspired by the 150th anniversary of the VEE'. A trip to Menindee launched the project in 2010 with ten artists, but has since grown to twenty-six artists. Over the last eight years, a group of ten artists has travelled to Menindee during September-October each year, to find, collect, press and paint the plants on Beckler's list.

As in Beckler's time, the collection of plants from this arid region combines 'art, science, history and country' (p. 12).

What is important to emphasize here, is that this project not only looks back to earlier plant collection and study, but also looks forward to the scientific, social, cultural and economic imperatives we face in Australia today and into the future. In discussing the urgent need today to protect our fragile arid environments, Mali Moir writes that the present-day artists were greatly encouraged by being able to find the same species of plants encountered by Beckler in the early 1860's.

The project has been given assistance from specialists in botanical field work as well as the local people of Menindee, and other key local and state government agencies.

It is evident that, as with our Florilegium project in the Southern Highlands, the assistance of these experts and agencies has supported and enabled the artists to do their beautiful work.

Rita Parkinson writes in *The Botanical Art Files; Narratives* p.5 (see book review in this issue) 'there is more than one reason to be a botanical artist. There is more than one path to follow and more than one goal to aspire'.

The Menindee project shows how botanical artists can, and do, work successfully with others in collaborative ventures. These artists' contributions are remarkable and significant. I encourage you to take up such opportunities should they come your way. The rewards are considerable



Swainsonia greyana Darling Pea, Watercolour,
by Ludwig Becker, 1860.

In January 15-18, 2019, Mali Moir will be conducting a four-day workshop entitled *Botanical Art and Collecting for Herbaria Intensive Workshop*, at NatureArt Lab, in Canberra. See **Workshops and Events** section of this newsletter (p12) for more details.

Talking about Botanical Art Understanding *Seeing* is Crucial for an Artist

By Cathryn Coutts

This article talks about three crucial aspects of *seeing* that are important for botanical artists. Each of them is discussed here specifically in relation to drawing.

They involve, firstly the way artists see, and seek to understand their subject; secondly why artists need to understand how the human eye sees; and thirdly the way viewers see our drawings but put their own meanings into them.

Important, obvious and something we often overlook, is the fact that two people are involved in seeing our drawings - the artist and the viewer.

When drawing a plant, we often focus our attention on the elements, rules and conventions we have been taught, about shape and form, composition, colour, tonal values and so forth. In other words, we focus on the technical aspects.

But how often do we ask such questions as: what is my understanding of this plant? What do I really want to say about it in my drawing? What are the qualities of it that I want people to notice?

When we look and observe, we search for *understanding*, we are not just drawing what we see. Leonardo da Vinci, one of the greatest ever observers of nature, searched for order and patterns of growth when drawing plants. Here are two examples of his timelessly beautiful drawings of plants (Source *Through the Eyes of Leonardo da Vinci*, by B. Barber).



Study of Two Plants – *Caltha palustris* and *Anemone nemorosa*, by Leonardo da Vinci, c. 1508-10



Ornithogalum umbellatum Star of Bethlehem, by Leonardo da Vinci, 1506-8

Leonardo's drawing of the Star of Bethlehem, suggests the movement of water flowing over the

plant, because it grows in/near water. '... the intricate swirls of leaves are similar to some of Leonardo's studies of water movement, making a nice connection between the plant, which depends on water, and the shapes and patterns of swirls of water as they pass through constricted openings' (Barber, p.20).

In these drawings, we are truly 'looking over the shoulder' of Leonardo, seeing the plants through his eyes.

Sarah Simblet (*Botany for the Artist*, p20) shows us another example of how we can follow an artist's process of thinking as he strives for understanding of the subject. She refers to the work of the 18th century botanical artist Georg Dionysius Ehret (1708-1770), explaining that his notebooks contained freshly made studies, personal notes and direct records of the appearance of plants. They are not formal botanical plates, and in their informality, allow us to 'feel present at the moment of making, looking over the artist's shoulder' (p.20).

Artists' sketchbooks are often appreciated as much as their finished work, for just this reason. Viewers enjoy following the thinking paths an artist takes as they strive to understand what they are seeing.



Aloe Vera, by Georg Dionysius Ehret, pencil ink and watercolour on paper, c.mid 1700's

One of the most critical things for an artist to do when drawing, is to work from *life*, either in the field, or from an actual specimen. This close observation is fundamental to all drawing, as Sarah Simblet emphasizes. ‘I always draw from real plants – never photographs – because plants are three-dimensional and were once alive even if they are no longer (*Botany for the Artist*, p6).

Not only is *seeing* a process of seeking understanding of the subject, it is also a process that occurs in our brain. It is our brains that make sense of what our eyes are looking at.

This is very clearly explained by Sarah Simblet in *Botany For The Artist*, a book most likely familiar to many of you. You may not, however, be as familiar with her YouTube videos, which I discovered recently. She is, without doubt, not only a wonderful artist and writer, but also a gifted communicator, able to explain complex ideas in simple terms. I recently watched an interview with her - a YouTube video from 2013, which you can find by searching YouTube under the following heading: *Sarah Simblet talks to Nikki Westcott at Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens*.

Several other interviews with her are available, and all are worth viewing. But in this one I was struck by her ideas about the processes of *looking and seeing*, in botanical drawing.

When I went back to *Botany For The Artist*, I found that these ideas are a strong theme throughout the book. Why hadn’t I noticed this before? Most likely because I was so taken with all her magnificent drawings that I failed to read much of the text!

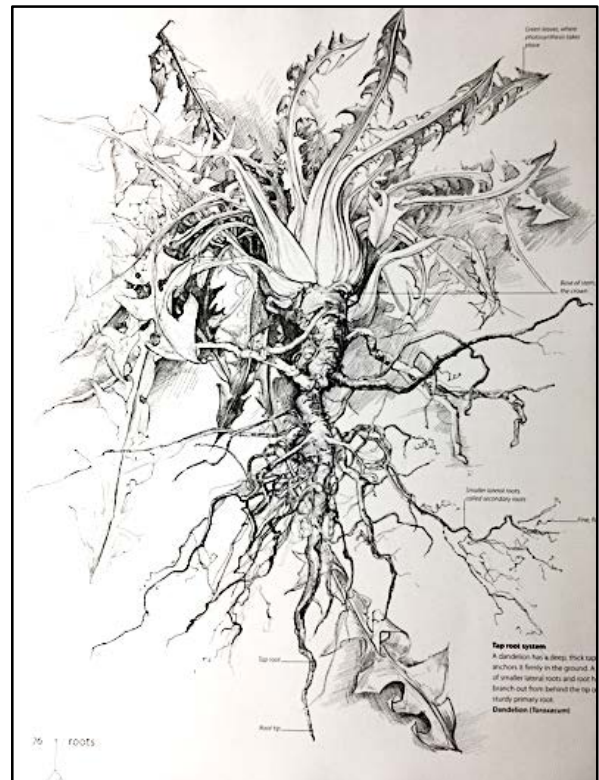
In the video mentioned above, she talks a lot about observation, about how we see, and how our brains process visual information. By understanding how a viewer looks at our work, we can learn a great deal about what elements to emphasize and where to direct the viewer’s attention. In other words, understanding *seeing* is crucial for any artist.

When asked by Nikki Westcott why so many botanical works have a ‘flat look and lack three dimensions’, Simblet explains that rendering an entire surface with immaculate detail all over (as

can happen if it is drawn solely from a photograph), doesn’t simulate our experience of seeing. ‘As I look at something with my right eye, my left eye is slightly out of focus and doesn’t see the same way. Some parts are crisply in focus and other parts are out of focus’.

She recommends that we draw to emulate how the eyes see, by having some areas in focus and some not, by using hard and soft edges on forms. Let your edges dissolve in some places, she says. Concentrate on details in some areas, and leave other areas understated or implied. The viewer’s brain will complete the picture anyway. Drawing this way, she suggests, will give your drawing a freshness and spontaneity.

The beautiful drawing below is an example of how she has put these ideas into practice. There are areas with greater or lesser detail, edges hard and soft, areas understated. This is a study of how the roots of plants work. As the viewers of this drawing, our brains can complete the whole image, while at the same time the artist is showing us what she has seen, and what she wants to say about this plant.



Dandelion (*Taraxacum*) by Sarah Simblet

(*Botany For The Artist*, p.76)

When we create a drawing of a plant (and put it on display) we are inviting a viewer to see what we have seen, observe what we have observed and share our experience of the plant. But the ways *they* interact with our work and give meaning to it, are their own.

Have you ever been surprised by a viewer's reactions to your work? Most viewers I have encountered looking at my work, are generally polite. If they don't particularly like it, they just move on to something else.

In a recent exhibition of my work this year, a friend who has helped me to find specimens, and knows a lot more than me about the plants, made an interesting comment. She said: 'I've looked at that plant so many times, but I have never seen it the way you do. You've enabled me to see it in a new way.' I had created an image of a plant she knew so well, from plants she grew herself, but she had never seen it as an artist does. Even expert growers of plants will tell you that a drawing can show them something new.

I watch people buy art works at our exhibitions and often like to talk to them about why they find something attractive enough to want to take it home. Their reasons should not surprise us. The picture gives them some 'possession' of the plant, perhaps one that they can't grow themselves but love anyway. It can also stir up memories, remind them of things that we are not aware of.

To me it is very important for us to understand that we can invite a viewer into our 'picture space' in order to see as we have seen, but we cannot control what the experience of our drawing will mean to them.

In conclusion, I encourage you to think about what you want to say about a plant through your drawings, how you might use the formal elements of drawing to direct the viewer's gaze and what possible meanings the drawing might convey to them.

What about paintings, you ask? Similar principles apply, of course, but that conversation can wait for another time. If you have thoughts that you would like to share about this, however, please send them to me.

Artist's Profile

Jo Matthews

What always intrigues me is the diversity not only of Mother Nature's incredible array of colour but the routes that botanical artists have taken to arrive at where they are today.

Growing up in southern England, I attribute my scientific interest in the world around me to the fact that my mother was a nurse and my father an electrical engineer, so I really had no choice in the matter. Although my father was also an excellent but totally unaccomplished artist – I have often found myself saying "It is such a shame he never found the time.....".

My favourite teacher at high school was one of two biology teachers, one generally took the zoological side of things but my favourite led all things botanical. It took me a while to realise that maybe it wasn't just the teacher that impressed me but the subject. I went on to University and specialised in botany from the start. Although I thought taxonomy was particularly boring, the biochemistry of photosynthesis and the wondrous reasons for plant colour were more up my street.

Life is a journey and after a career in banking (and no hint of any form of art in my life since leaving school) I found it hard to come up with excuses as to why I shouldn't move to another country with my husband's job. So I spent nearly 3 years in Germany and then in February 2004 found myself landing on a rainy Monday morning in Australia not knowing anyone other than my husband and with not a lot to do.

Oh at last, I had time on my hands and I could speak the language so I enrolled in a watercolour class. I remember the poor teacher asking me if I had ever done watercolour before. 'Oh yes' I said. 'Oh no' I thought. The next day I bought a 'how to paint in watercolour' book and tried hard with still life, but it was funny how I never finished anything in the few short hours of the class. At the end of the first term the class settled down to paint a large bunch of bright red Camellias but as one stem had snapped off on the way the teacher asked if anyone wanted to paint just one bloom – my hand was up before

she had finished the sentence and I had one of those lightbulb moments.

The next term saw me enrolled in the beginner's Botanical Art class and from there I went on to work under the delightful auspices of Lesley Elkan for a few years where I learned an enormous amount – not least the value of patience – and how to correct mistakes!

The biggest problem I find is that I always seem to have reasons not to spend time painting, one of those being the fact that for a few years I was heavily involved with the Botanical Art Society of Australia (BASA) as both Secretary and joint President. Unfortunately, shortly after this time I stopped painting altogether.

The photo below was taken at the 2009 *Art and Science of the Plant* exhibition at the Palm House in Sydney with other BASA committee members. We'd managed to arrange for our patron, Graham Ross (known from the *Better Homes and Gardens* TV show) to do the opening.



(L-R) Me, Robyn Langford-Brown, Graham Ross (Patron of BASA), Tanya Hoolihan, Anita Robbie, Claire Stack

I wanted to grow more of my own food so we moved to a 5-acre property in Kangaroo Valley, where I realised that growing both edible and ornamental gardens limits the growth of painting. However, my subsequent discovery that Susannah Blaxill gave classes at her studio in the Southern Highlands got me very excited. Susannah's now infamous 'floating' Eggplant had blown me away and the chance of attending a workshop with the artist was a dream come true. Although not immediately obvious at the

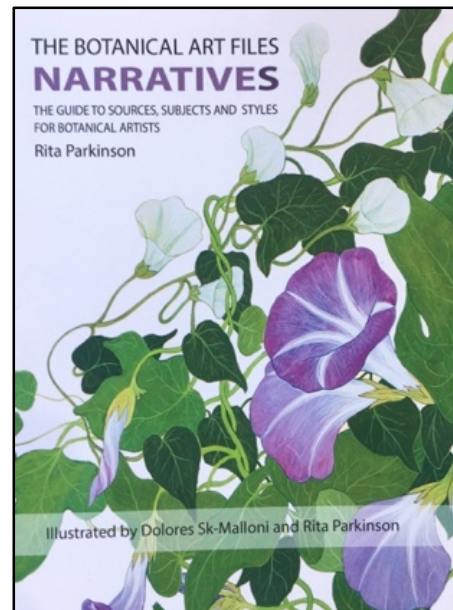
time this proved to be the turning point back into a world I love.

As well as learning from such a generous teacher I made contact with the untutored group of like-minded botanical artists based at the Bowral and District Art Gallery. They have between them such a wealth of artistic experience, all gained from their different journeys. I cannot begin to thank them enough for the advice and support that I have gained by merely having a chat over the paintbrushes!

Book Review

By Cathryn Coutts

The Botanical Art Files: Narratives, by Rita Parkinson, 2016, The Botanical Press.



I have found all of Rita's books on botanical art interesting and helpful, with so much practical advice for artists. In this one she puts botanical art into an historical perspective, and then explains that 'our world is very different' from that of earlier times. We live in a world 'saturated with visual imagery and our work has to compete in this contemporary explosion of media' (p.5).

She offers a new and refreshing way to think about the purposes of botanical art, in today's context, emphasizing that botanical illustration has not always been only for classification purposes, but also for horticulture, medicine, and publication.

There are two new priorities in today's plant world, she says. First is the need to maintain biodiversity and second is that very little of the total mass of plant life has actually been described so far (p5). Both of these priorities offer endless possibilities for botanical artists.

Rita encourages us to consider the benefits of working on a Florilegia, because it is a different experience to working alone, and provides opportunities to learn new things along the way. In addition, 'many parts of the world have ecology issues of sustainability and endangerment and for several new florilegia in the making this is the central theme of their collection, and that has to be a good thing' (p32).

This is a most interesting and useful book to add to your collection.

Traveller's Tales

By Iona Willis

In August I revisited Cairns Botanic Gardens and found it once again an interesting visit. One of my favourite parts is the conservatory, The Watkins Munro Martin Conservatory. It houses the Garden's more sensitive and valuable collections. There are Aroids (including the *Amorphophallus* collection), bromeliads, carnivorous plants, cycads, ferns, palms, orchids and tassell ferns. The building is built in the shape of the *Licuala ramsayi* leaf. This palm is native to the area.



Being in North Queensland the gardens of course have a very tropical feel and one feels very closely surrounded by plants. It certainly hasn't the open feel of the Sydney Gardens.

There is an aboriginal plant-use garden with a guided walk. Many species of Australian rainforest plants are edible, but a significant number are also extremely poisonous. Over the years the Aboriginal people learned to de-toxify these plants to a level of safety. The process of detoxification is often long and complicated. For example, fruit from Cycads was roasted, sliced, crushed and leached in running water, to produce and edible flour which was then cooked and eaten. In the guided walk, there is information about most of the plants and their uses, which is fascinating.

Friends House is situated within the gardens on Collins Avenue, Edge Hill ph. (07) 4032 6650.

Visitors are very well catered for and there are free bird walks at 8am every Tuesday. Meet at Friends House.

There are free guided walks for casual visitors Monday to Friday at 10am, - again meet at the Friends House.

For tours and private groups specialized walks are provided to suit your own requirements. For just \$5.00 a head (minimum charge \$80.00) you can select your own time and tour format. The guides meet you at the bus stop.

There are many parts of the garden which I have not explored yet, including the Gondwanan Evolution Garden, the rainforest boardwalk, the Chinese friendship garden and the two lakes, one salt water and one fresh water. I must mention that the salad which we had at the Visitor Centre was scrumptious!

Next door to the gardens is the Tanks Arts Centre. Huge, oil tanks have been converted into interesting gallery and function centres. There is nearly always an interesting exhibition to drop in on when you have had enough of plants!

The gardens are open weekdays from 8.30am to 4.00pm and weekends 8.30am to 1.00pm.

For more details see:

www.cairnsbotanicgardens.com.au



Workshops and Events

NatureArt Lab. Three events and workshops coming up in 2019.

Botanical Art and Collecting for Herbaria Intensive Workshop. With Mali Moir. January 15-18, 2019, 9.30 to 4.30. Four days with a field excursion included. Venue is Workspace A, M16 Artspace, Blaxland Crescent, Griffith, ACT.

Cost \$540, early bird discount \$490 for bookings received by December 16. Enquiries to:

info@natureartlab.com.au

NatureArt in Borneo: Artists and Nature Lovers. April 9-20, 2019.

NatureArt in Borneo: Nature Photography. May 3-14, 2019.

Enquiries: info@natureartlab.com.au

Botanique Art. Classes with John Pastoriza Piñol. March 9 & 10, 2019, 9am to 4pm. Bowral & District Art Society (BDAS). Cost BDAS member \$270, Non members \$290. To book phone 02 48614093 or email: office@bdasgallery.com

For more information on John's work go to:

www.botanique-art.com

Websites

At www.natureartlab.com.au there are many interesting things to read about. One artist, Jessica Rosemary Shepherd is worth a look, also there are courses, workshops and events on offer.

YouTube: *Sarah Simblet talks to Nikki Westcott at Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens.* Also, other interviews with Sarah Simblet are worth viewing.

Sketchbook Stories

By Cathryn Coutts

During the *For the Love of Plants* event in Bowral Art Gallery this year, I was fortunate to participate in Rita Parkinson's workshop *The Art of The Sketch*.

I enjoyed the workshop and found the skills I learnt most useful. I thought it would be interesting to share what we learnt with other artists.

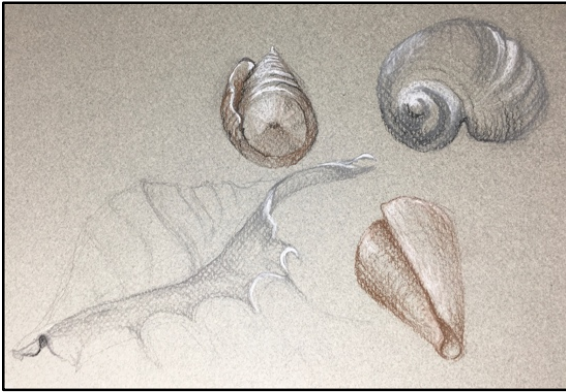
In the workshop outline, Rita explains: "sketching is a key tool for all artists that allows them to visualize, compose and communicate. The skill of quick notation is both a way of recording, and a means of observation. But a loose fluid form of drawing can be one that some botanical students have difficulty with, as a sketch needs to capture the essence of a subject in a dynamic way, and our usual focus on fine precision drawings can work against us."

This workshop is designed to loosen you up with exercises, prompts and small assignments. It will show you a simple 3-step sketch technique that will get you working quickly and efficiently and begin your own journey into sketchbooks and nature art journaling."

Under Rita's guidance we learnt to create fluid, natural sketches; emphasize the essence of a subject; use a quick method of applying light and shadow; and appreciate the art of nature journaling with page layouts.

We practised breaking objects down into simple forms to draw, experimenting with a variety of light, texture and surfaces, creating depth and volume, looking at perspective, drawing organic

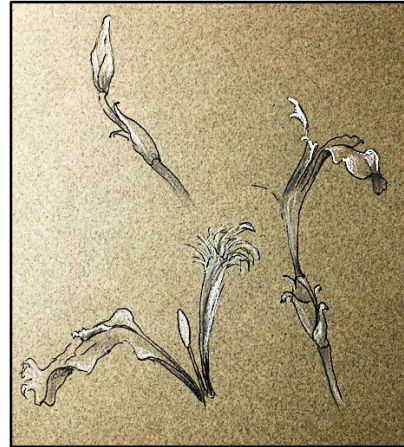
forms with a confident line and practising our observation skills.



These quick ways of working are most valuable to me, because I do some work in the field, drawing flowers that are endangered and can't be picked. Rita's methods will be invaluable for this purpose.

She encouraged us to draw in a more free and loose way, which was refreshing, and liberating too. I do spend a lot of time doing fine precision drawings, so to be able to start off working in a freer way actually improves my work, when I do come to do the more precise drawings.

I especially enjoyed working on mid-toned paper – browns and greys, starting with a quick line drawing with a micron pen, then adding tones with grey and white pencils.



I have often struggled when doing quick sketches in the field, to get accurate tonal values on *white* paper. With this method using *toned* paper, a lot of those problems are solved. Rita encouraged us to use just a small amount of light and dark, just enough to get a simple tonal effect. Of course, the paper colour becomes an active element in the picture, in a way that it doesn't when one draws on white. Some of my sketches are shown here. As Rita says, these are quick notations, and for me, in the field, (or even in the studio) they are intended to capture the *essence* of the subject.

Try this technique for yourself, and try adding some text as well. It's a wonderful way to *warm up* before drawing more precisely, and it's fun!

BDAS Botanic Artists Meetings in 2019

Only Term 1 dates are confirmed at this time: They are February 18, March 18, April 15.

Our special excursion to Bundanon is on Wednesday April 17. More details in 2019.

Publication Deadlines & Contact Details

This newsletter was edited and prepared by Cathryn Coutts. Next issue to be published in March 2019.

Contributions are most welcome. They should be received by February 23, 2019.

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.

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