

# Tendrils

*Australian Botanic Artists Regional Network (ABARN)*



Proteas from Mount Tomah Botanic Garden, Blue Mountains NSW - A spectacular place to visit

## Activities in 2017

### BDAS Botanic Artists

The major project for our Bowral group for this year is preparation for our next "For the Love of Plants" exhibition from 17-30 October 2018 at Bowral Art Gallery.



Eucryphia moorei flowers

We are continuing to firm up plans for the event, including which workshops will be held while the exhibition is on. More details on this in the new year.

The exhibition will also showcase images of significant native plants of the Southern Highlands as part of the Wingecarribee Flora project. The Eucryphia moorei, shown here is one such plant.

## News from Regional Groups

### Tasmania Botaniko Art Group

from Jean Henley

As reported in the last edition of *Tendrils*, botanical art is alive and well in Tasmania with a report on a small group of 17 artists based in Hobart. The Botaniko Art Group was created by

former students of Lauren Black, one of Australia’s leading botanical artists.

At the end of 2013, with Lauren pursuing other artistic avenues in 2014, she offered the group the opportunity to undertake a project with the Port Arthur Historic Management Authority to portray, through botanical paintings and drawings, the plants introduced to the site during the 1800s. A successful exhibition entitled *Port Arthur – an exotic garden – unlocking the botanical journey* and comprising 30 pieces of artwork, was held in the Asylum, Port Arthur Historic Site from 24 January – 6 March 2015.

During 2015, members of Botaniko prepared artwork for their second exhibition held at Narryna Heritage Museum, Battery Point, from 9 December 2015 to 15 May 2016 entitled *Knopwood’s Kitchen Garden – 1804-1824*.



Debbie Collins, *Radish* Watercolour  
From *Knopwood’s Kitchen Garden* exhibition

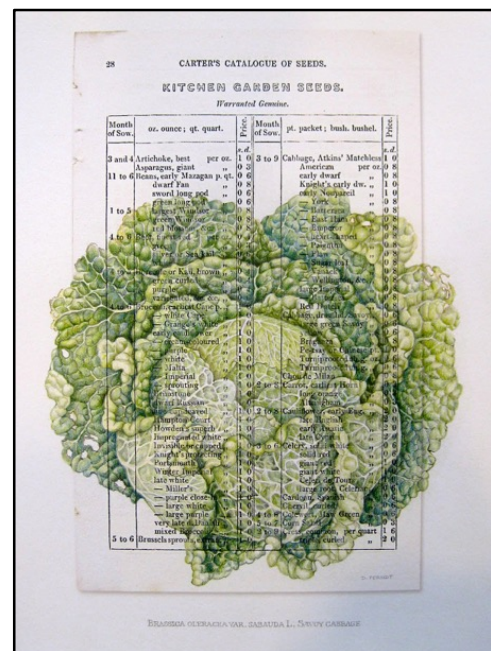
Based on the information contained in the extensive diaries kept by the first clergyman of Van Diemen’s Land, the Reverend Robert Knopwood who lived on his 30 acre land grant in Battery Point, and working with a Garden History Consultant, the group produced works of botanical interest based on the plants in

Knopwood’s kitchen garden. This garden is believed to be in the area situated behind the historic home Narryna and close to his home, Cottage Green.

After the success of the Port Arthur exhibition, Botaniko was invited to return to Port Arthur in 2016 to feature the culinary, medicinal and industrial plants introduced to the settlement during the 1800s. This work was completed during 2016 and exhibited at the Port Arthur site from 28 January to 27 March this year.

Botaniko members are currently working towards an exhibition in August of next year to commemorate the bicentenary of the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens. This exhibition includes plants of significance introduced to the Gardens during its 200 years.

The projects undertaken by Botaniko have captured the historical values of the plants introduced to the colony and following each exhibition, the work is keenly sought for hanging at various venues throughout the State.



## Exhibitions

### Current and Future Exhibitions

Jane Wray

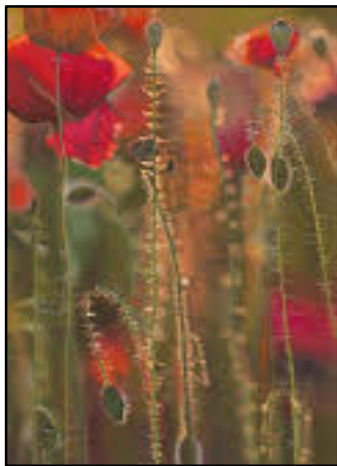
**Bowral Art Gallery, November 2 to 7, 2017.**

**Opening November 3, at 6.30pm**



Jane Wray *Glow*

Jane Wray is an award winning pastellist whose work is vibrant and intriguing. She is an exhibiting member of The Royal Art Society. Jane produces quirky pieces as well as beautiful studies capturing the essence of the natural world.



Jane Wray *Poppies*

Wendy Sharpe has said of Jane's work 'it is sensitive, skilful - at once soft and dramatic.' Quite a diverse exhibition, it features an exploration of the juxtaposition of the built environment with the natural world.

Jane's works are visually captivating.



Jane Wray *Dandelion*

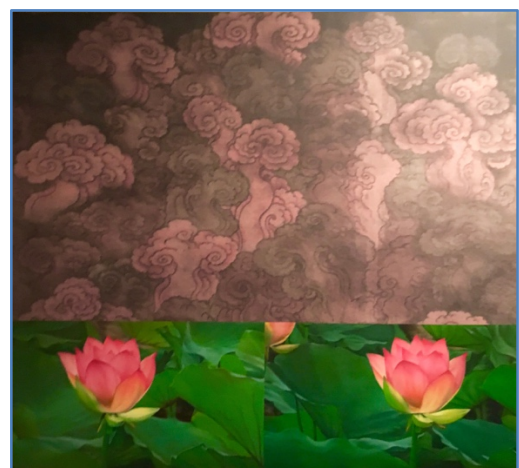
Opening Night is November 3 at 6.30pm. Share a wine and a chat with Jane about this stunning collection of her recent works.

Bowral Gallery is at 1 Short Street Bowral, NSW.

Open daily from 10am-4pm.

### **Art Gallery of NSW. *Glorious: earthly pleasures and heavenly realms***

Currently showing in the Lower Asian Gallery, until 2018, this exhibition is drawn from the Gallery's collection of Asian art. It celebrates moments of joy, whether changing seasons, appreciating painting, sipping tea or other pursuits.



John Yong *Cloud and Generic Flower Study* 1998  
Nero Scan and oil on canvas

I recommend that this exhibition is worth a look. There are a number of works that will be of

interest to those who love plants, from works which are centuries old, to very contemporary images using modern technology.

It offers us food for thought about how plants are represented and the media artists use, from the elegant simplicity of brush and ink, always timelessly beautiful, to the delicious splendour of gold background, large-panelled screens. This exhibition is truly a pleasure to view.



Rinpa School *Flowers of the four seasons* 17<sup>th</sup> century

Pair of six-panelled screens, ink, colour and sprinkled gold on paper.

**Art Gallery of NSW. *O’Keeffe, Preston, Cossington-Smith: Making Modernism.***

***On until October 2.***

This exhibition shows us the work of three remarkable women artists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. While their subject matter is diverse, all have a love of nature which they each express in very unique ways.

There is much to be learnt from these artists, each of whom has something to say about plants and how we think about them. Margaret Preston’s strong graphic images, so familiar and so often reproduced that it can be hard to see them with fresh eyes, sit alongside Grace Cossington-Smith’s wonderful sense of colour and Georgia O’Keeffe’s large scale close-ups of flowers and the desert environment near her home in New Mexico. Apologies for not including picture titles here.

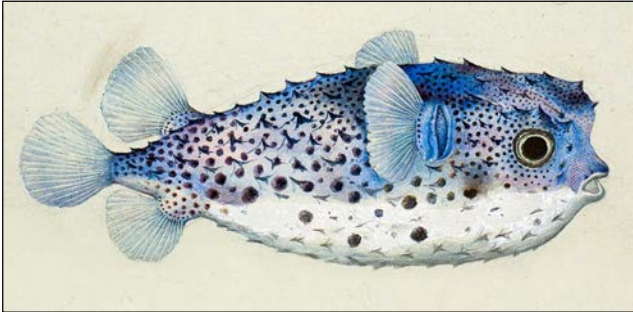


Margaret Preston



Georgia O’Keeffe

**The Art of Science: Baudin's Voyages 1800-1804.** This exhibition is now open at the Australian National Maritime Museum, Sydney from August 31 to November 26, 2017 and later goes to National Museum of Australia, Canberra, March 15 to June 11, 2018.



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

It showcases original sketches and paintings by Baudin's artists Charles-Alexandre Lesueur and Nicholas-Martin Petit during the voyage of 1800-1804. They created their works on the shores and off the coasts of Australia and captured some of the first European views of Australian animals, landscapes and portraits of Aboriginal People. Not to be missed.

**Red Box Gallery, National Herbarium of NSW, Royal Botanic Garden Sydney. *Curtis's Australian Flowers*. August 14 to November 3, 9.30am to 4.30pm, Monday to Friday.**



Image from the *Curtis's Australian Flowers* Exhibition

One of the greatest scientific periodicals, *Curtis's Botanical Magazine; or Flower-Garden Displayed*, began publication on February 1, 1787, making it the oldest continuously published botanical periodical. It has featured more than 11,000 coloured plates of flowers, each with a description of their Linnean classification and information about its source and cultivation round the world. In the production of the first series of 53 volumes from 1787 to 1827, 188 Australian flowers were featured, with recognition being given to the contributions of acclaimed plant hunters including Sir Joseph Banks and Daniel Solander of the Cook expedition, and Robert Brown from the Flinders expedition to circumnavigate Australia.

The works in this exhibition range from 1790 when the first Australian flower featured to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century.

**State Library of Western Australia, *Botanical Wonderland*. Thursday August 10 to Sunday September 24, 2017.**

For anyone lucky enough to be in Western Australia this month, this exhibition could be well worth visiting. On show are original materials from the collections of the Royal Western Australian Historical Society, Western Australian Museum and the State Library of Western Australia. It shows some of the many ways Western Australians have interpreted the State's rich plant life - from pressed seaweed, to wildflower painting, embroidery, photography and porcelain.

## Exhibition Reviews

**Manly Art Gallery and Museum. *Wildflowers*, Salvatore Zofrea. On from July 14 to September 3, 2017.**



Salvatore Zofrea *Banksias* from *Days of Summer* Series

As the dates above indicate, this exhibition has recently closed, but the websites will still have interesting images and information about the exhibition and the artist. A beautiful hard-cover publication is also available for sale from the gallery, entitled *Days of Summer; Salvatore Zofrea*, by Anne Ryan. Published by the Mosman Art Gallery.

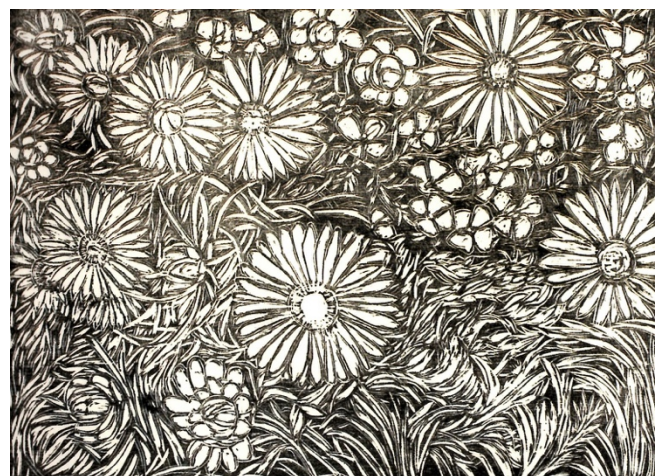
Salvatore Zofrea once again presents us with his own special interpretation of Australian plants, inspired by the natural landscape in Kurrajong near the Blue Mountains and North Head, Manly. This exhibition comprised 40 woodcuts, in the *Days of Summer* series, many of which are hand-coloured, and are accompanied by some recent watercolour paintings. The Australian wildflower and bird images in these works attest

to the artist's continued interest in representing the diversity of life in his environment.

The strong black line work and pattern of the woodcuts are wonderfully contrasted by the watercolour applied softly and loosely on top. In some prints the black and white image is left uncoloured. The watercolour paintings, shown in the book as the sketchbook pages, are deliciously free and loose.



Salvatore Zofrea *Days of Summer* Sketchbook page



Salvatore Zofrea *Daisies and Wax Flowers*  
Woodcut from *Days of Summer* Series

**Nicola Dickson *Voyagers' Tales: Labillardière*. Beaver Galleries Deakin ACT, from 10-20 August 2017.**

I was fortunate enough to see this exhibition in Canberra, before it closed recently. If interested, you should try looking at the Gallery's website or look up the artist and her work.

Nicola Dickson's paintings explore perceptions of the natural world of Australia, with this exhibition drawing inspiration from the Bruni d'Entrecasteaux expedition to Australia and the Pacific in 1791-94. Of particular interest are the records of the naturalist Jacques Julien Houtou Labillardière and expedition artist Jean Piron.

The main focus of the exhibition is on Labillardière's account of the seven weeks he spent around the Labillardière Peninsula, Recherche Bay and Bruny Island in south-east Tasmania.



Some paintings represent parts of the historical drawings and topographical maps, or engravings made of these localities. Other images are derived from photographs by the artist.

Shown here are two of Nicola's paintings, both done in acrylic and oil on timber panels. I regret that I didn't record the titles for these when I visited the exhibition. Her work shows a refreshingly individual style and use of colour.

The 'vignette' effect in the first painting also references the style of the period when the French artists' original works were done.



### **Looking Back and Looking Forward**

Two other works currently on exhibition at the *Glorious: Earthly Pleasures and Heavenly Realms* exhibition at AGNSW, are the following, shown here for our *Looking Back and Looking Forward* section. You can see both of these at the exhibition until 2018.

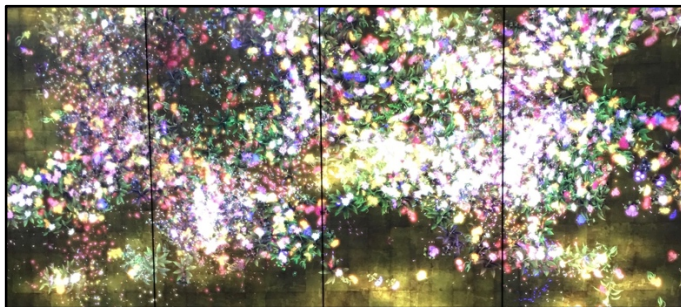
Firstly, looking back, we can appreciate the timelessly beautiful, 19<sup>th</sup> century work shown here, which captures the essence of the plant with such economy, in the great tradition of Chinese painting. It is one of a series of album leaves.

Encompassing the skills of drawing and painting, as well as composition and observation, it's hard to do better than this.

Looking forward, the work by the Tokyo-based collective called teamLab, gives the impression of a traditional gilded Japanese screen, but emits rather than reflects light. It moves and changes as one sits and watches it, and is quite lovely to see. An art work that invites both reflection and involvement by the viewer.



Wang Yongyu 1842 *Climbing flower rose, begonia*  
Album leaf, ink on paper



*Flowers and People – Gold 2015*  
Tokyo-based teamLab

## Talking about Botanic Art

By Rosie Wade

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.

When I say to people, “I do botanical art”, they often seem to misunderstand the complexity of what it is we’re trying to do. Botanical art is not the leisurely flower painting of well-bred Victorian ladies. Nor is it simply a scientific study of plants. It is an art deeply embedded in making sense of our world and our place in it, in seeing rather than just looking, and in creating understanding about the richness of life on the planet.

The Macquarie dictionary says that botany is “the science of plants; the branch of biology that deals with plant life”. (Even the use of the metaphor “branch” suggests how ingrained in our thinking is the role of plants, their importance to humans.) Back to the dictionary. Art is described as “the production or expression of what is beautiful (esp. visually), or of more than ordinary significance” (italics mine).

So botanical art treads a spectrum between the purely scientific, like the old herbals, which were meant to help with plant identification and the documentation of the uses of the plant, and the purely beautiful. Between the exquisitely detailed work of a Margaret Stones or a Margaret Flockton, working for scientists, and the gorgeous, glorious huge paintings of Rosie Sanders, with her voluptuous, dramatic understanding of flowers.

We have such technology available today – electron microscopes, digital technology, ways of seeing into plants that were never available to our forebears – I’m not surprised when



people question the relevance of botanical art. Surely digital photos would do? There are superbly talented photographers, it's true. If you look at a book like *Wildflower Country*, by Stanley and Kaisa Breeden, their amazing photos are created by layering thousands of digital images, one on top of the other. They're beautiful to look at, but I'd suggest that the labour-intensive work of that achievement is what a botanical artist does, with just paint and paper. The difference is in that dictionary definition I highlighted earlier. The difference is that a botanical artist highlights, sees, and translates to other humans, what is "of more than ordinary significance". Anyone can take a photograph.



Angela Lober *Doryanthes excelsa*

To then turn it into something that reveals the nature of the plant, that takes a human eye, heart and creativity. To show the flirty flutter of a group of poppies (*Papaver nudicaule*), or the dramatic, elegant stateliness of a Gynea lily (*Doryanthes excelsa*), to render plants as

personalities as well as scientific entities, that takes an artist. (I keep thinking of Angela Lober's amazing doryanthes in the most recent Botanica exhibition!).

There are basic, fundamental things you should show in a botanical painting. How the plant grows. What it looks like, as accurately and as revealingly as possible. The stages of its life. Its colour and shape and form. That's the science.

But you also want others to see the plant, to see the way it dances, turns its face towards the sun (or away from it), to see the infinite beauty in the shading of a petal, or the magnificent structure in a skeletonised leaf. To see a turnip, not simply as a convenient soup extender, but as a glossy, beautiful creation with a divine flush of purple. It is our human response to each plant that reveals, I believe, what is "of more than ordinary significance".



Cathryn Coutts *Eucryphia moorei* Etching hand coloured (detail)

What we now know about the planet of ours is that everything is interconnected, in what my high school biology textbooks called "the web of life". That means that every plant is "of more than ordinary significance", and the botanical artist does the work of translating that significance into something so beautiful that no-one can fail to see, really see, that significance.

## Artist's Profile

### Janet Hicks

**I am having an Exhibition, 'Compact', in Ten Thousand Paces Gallery, Springett's Arcade, Bowral, opening Saturday November 4 at 2.00 pm, until Thursday November 16, 2017. Works discussed here will be hanging and I extend an invitation to all.**



As a child, I can remember always being interested in drawing. Walter Foster "How to Draw..." books are on my art bookshelves to this day. However, it was some time until I actively began making art.

It was my husband who said: "Get out and enrol," as we drove past our local TAFE college in Cootamundra. Stepping into the Adult Art classroom that first time, was the beginning of my art experience, which continues... I must applaud two tutors, Alan McClure and Tom Parsons, who gave me the confidence to experiment and reflect on the learning to be gained from mistakes.

I have played with a reasonable amount of media, but always seem to return to watercolour. I love the clarity, flexibility, degree of tone and the unpredictability when painting wet in wet. To pair watercolour with pen and ink, pencil, and some other mediums is also most satisfying.

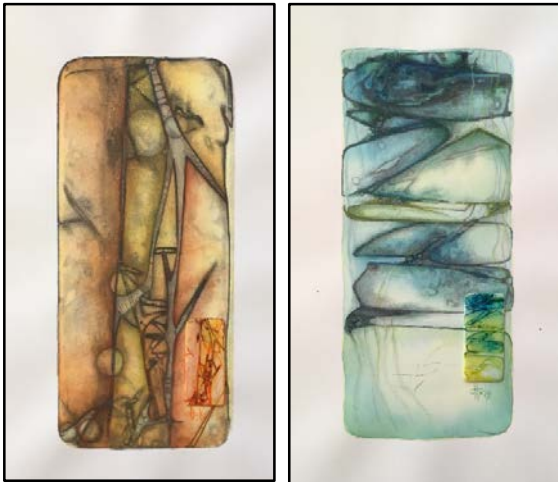
Flora intrigues me. I am amazed at how nature presents tones of colour, patterns and rhythms in foliage, buds, blooms and seed pods in order to repeat life cycles. This curiosity led me to classes run by Elaine Musgrave and so exposure to botanical art. Being a relatively new member of BDAS Botanic Artists has given me connection to a wonderful group of inspiring women and exposure to a rich source of botanical information and enjoyment.

Since 2001 I have been a member of AIM, Art in Miniature, a group of artists based in Canberra. Among the surfaces used by early miniature artists was ivory and I have focused my efforts, painting on this medium to make miniature works. I use antique ivory piano keys, retrieved from pianos that are headed for disposal. Sadly, these instruments are no longer wanted, but I feel I can at least create a new life and respect for the keys, as a piece of art. Drawing botanical specimens as carefully as possible, allows me to reproduce them on the ivory keys. I hope I do the specimens justice.



Janet Hicks Miniature Painting on Piano Key

Lately, I have ventured into more contemporary territory. Still using the ivory keys as my trigger, I have used pigmented inks and cling film to create patterns on the keys. It has been exciting to see what these patterns suggest to me after I have had the keys scanned and blown up in grey scale. From there, I work back into the image, which has been copied onto watercolour paper.



Janet Hicks

These works have taken me back to a six-month trip around more remote areas of this wonderful continent of ours. My husband and I set off in our Patrol with a tent and minimal comforts and I am grateful I can relive parts of that trip again through my art.



Janet Hicks

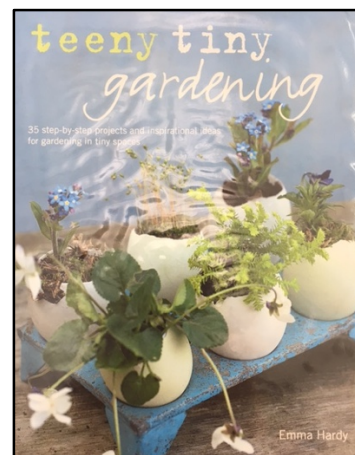
## Book Review

Many botanic artists are also very keen gardeners and combine their love of painting and drawings plants with growing them as well.

One of our Bowral artists, Jacqueline Donovan, was intrigued by the concept of ‘tiny’ gardens and has provided the book review for this issue.

### ***Teeny Tiny Gardening* by Emma Hardy**

“Teeny tiny gardening” by Emma Hardy offers 35 step-by-step projects and inspirational ideas for gardening in tiny spaces (Published by CICO Books, London/New York).



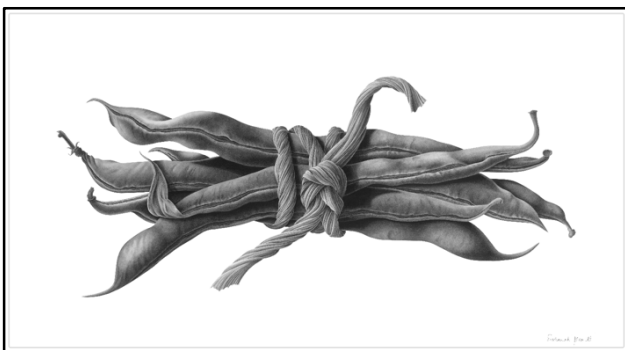
Well if you didn't know what to do with all those odd things like cups that get stuck in the back of the cupboard, not to mention step-ladders, old chairs, colanders, old guttering and granny's glass cake-stand for which you never mastered her recipe, because you kept forgetting to put in the fundamentals like the eggs or flour and it ended up looking like a flattened rubber tyre and not something you wanted to show off to visitors on any cake-stand, least of all granny's, then this little book shows you how to make them into a terrarium. This intriguing book has wonderful graphics and excellent step-by-step visuals to stimulate the imagination, and I recommend it for everyone with big ideas but little spaces.

It was quite a surprise that it shows you how to do the hanging baskets to perfection, always a hard thing to master here in oz. It's just a mindset of not trying to actually grow things, but to display which is something I never really thought about. However it is absolutely right! Growing things in containers is hard enough here, we just have to change our mindset to display, not grow long term. Of course you don't need to copy what is in the book. I'm sure we all have odd things we never thought about using... in our cupboards tucked away...! So go get creative, and remember, when you're enjoying your boiled egg with soldiers, the shell too can be reused.

## **Workshops and Events**

### **Susannah Blaxill**

#### **Workshop Dates for November, 2017**



Susannah Blaxill Dried Bean Bunch

Due to demand, Susannah is now holding four workshops instead of the previously advertised three workshops in November, 2017 at her studio in Mittagong. Each Workshop is limited to six students to ensure individual attention.

The Drawing class will focus on graphite and ink, and the Painting class on watercolour washes and watercolour dry brush technique. Please contact Susannah for further information. The dates are as follows:

**Workshop 1 Drawing:** Saturday 11th to Monday 13th November, 2017.

**Workshop 2 Painting:** Thursday 16th to Sunday 19th November, 2017.

**Workshop 3 Drawing:** Wednesday 22nd and Thursday 23rd November, 2017.

**Workshop 4 Painting:** Saturday 25th November to Tuesday 28th November, 2017.

**Contact details:** mob. 0409285261 or:

[www.blaxill.com](http://www.blaxill.com) or [susannah@blaxill.com](mailto:susannah@blaxill.com)

### **Helen Fitzgerald: – Painting Birds in Watercolour, a four-day workshop.**

Location is Bungendore School of Arts, near Canberra. Suitable for beginners and advanced students. Download enrolment form from the website: [www.helenfitzgerald.com](http://www.helenfitzgerald.com)

or Contact Helen on 02 6297 2697.



Helen Fitzgerald *Glossy Black Cockatoos*

## Websites

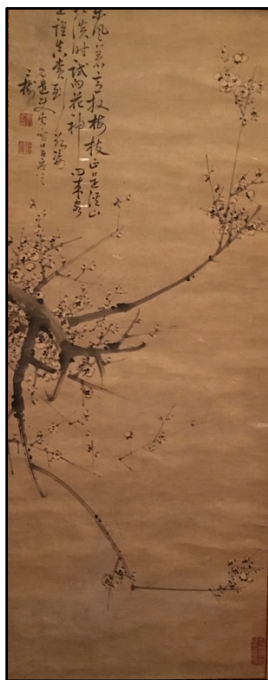
One website which readers may find extremely useful is the following:

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

It has very specific information and advice. For example, in the section called Tips and Techniques, you can find *Conventions of Botanical Art and Illustration* which gives good descriptions of terms we often encounter as botanical artists. Another section is *How to draw plants to scientific standards*. This is a site with very helpful information.



Huang Yongyu *Lotus* 1981, Ink & colour on paper



Tong Yu 18thcent. *Lotus* Ink on paper

Both from *Glorious: Earthly Pleasures Heavenly Realms*

## BDAS Botanic Artists Meetings in 2017

Term 1: February 20, March 20, April 10

Term 2: May 15, June 26

Term 3: July 17, August 14, September 11

Term 4: October 23, November 20, December 4

All meetings are held in Studio 3, Bowral District Art Society, from 10am to 4pm.

## Publication Deadlines & Contact Details

This newsletter was prepared by Cathryn Coutts. The next issue will be published at the end of November 2017.

Contributions are invited from individual artists, workshop tutors, art exhibitions or local botanic art groups. There is **no charge** for advertising. Contributions should be received by **November 27, 2017**.

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

Enquiries and contributions to:

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



Grace Cossington-Smith, from *Making Modernism*

Currently at AGNSW