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West Coast - How about you?  
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## Welcome to our Summer issue!

Happy New Year to all our members! I hope you had a lovely break over the festive season doing what you love with those you love.

May 2024 bring you good health, happiness and plenty of time for your art!

We have a whopper of an issue this summer for you to get your teeth into! I have loved compiling this newsletter with its amazing variety of news, reviews and of course your lovely work.

In this issue we have lots of member news - lovely to hear how you are getting botanical art out there among the masses through conferences, exciting projects and artist residencies. Read Jane Humble's book review - the new book 'Flora' which is getting great reviews. Jane went along to the book launch at Te Papa. Lisa Dickson writes about having fun learning to use the Zentangle method to decorate gift tags and cards at our last zoom Social Evening.

Dora Baker from Whanganui is our 'Featured Artist' and discusses why and how she makes colour swatches.

Ever get confused about how to correctly label your artwork? Fear no more - Wilma Blom demystifies it all for us.

Marie Sibylla Merian is without doubt an incredible woman, disregarding all expectations of women in the 1600s, recording plants in the far reaches of the globe. Read Jane Fitzgerald's SBA Diploma essay she has generously shared with us.

Lastly a huge welcome to our new members - Sue Wickison, Paula Warren, Helen Grant, Karen Salmon and Carole Cornes.

*Editor*

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# PRESIDENT'S NEWS

A very Happy New Year to you all!



As another year rolls over, I look back over 2023 and I am delighted to see our membership has increased by 31! This is definitely the most new members ever over a year. In fact, I can remember when our total membership wasn't much more than that in total!

Our promotion with Kings Seeds is still ongoing, with 12 different members being the 'Botanical Artist of the Month' and showcased in their monthly newsletters and social media. In return for promoting our society, 12 lucky customers will receive a print from one of the artists in their January giveaway. I thought you'd like to see which members have taken part and the prints they will be sending out. You may already have seen these images on our social media!



Images and artists clockwise from top left -

- Jane Fitzgerald** – 'Tamarillo, *Solanum betaceum*' - watercolour
- Heike Jane Zimmermann** - 'Kowhai' - graphite
- Jenny Coker** - 'Peony Cluster' - Oils
- Janet Marshall** – '*Cornus Capitata*, Strawberry Dogwood' – Ink and wash
- Dora Baker** – 'Apple Crunch' – colour pencil
- Sandra Morris** – 'Alpine Plants Tongariro National Park' – watercolour and graphite
- Lisa Dickson** – 'Sweet Pea' - watercolour
- Jennifer Duval-Smith** – '*Magnolia* – Star Wars' - watercolour
- Jo Ewing** – 'Poroporo, *Solanum laciniatum*' - watercolour and graphite
- Elena Brambilla** – 'Red Clover, *Trillium pratense*' - watercolour
- Lesley Alexander** – 'Summer Days' - watercolour
- Claire Broughton** – 'Eleven Eucalyptus Leaves' - watercolour

## PRESIDENT'S NEWS cont....

I came across this website which I thought you might be interested in. It's a directory of botanical artists and there are a few internationally known artists among them. Perhaps you might like to join? Another way to get your work noticed!

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

Our 2024 exhibition, 'Botanica 24' will take place in the North Island this year. I hope to have more information on the dates and venue soon. It will likely take place in spring/early summer so plenty of time to think about what you would like to enter.

Our other big exhibition is the Botanical Art Worldwide exhibition. We should have the entry forms and Ts and Cs out in the next few weeks. We will be accepting submissions from September, with the deadline for entries end of November this year – dates etc to be confirmed.

All BAWW information will be available on our website so keep checking. Those of you who have submitted your interest will receive an email keeping you informed soon. Remember you don't have to be a Full BASNZ member to submit work for consideration - anyone who is either living permanently in NZ or is a NZ citizen living abroad can enter!

I've just seen that Julia Trickey has announced her next set of speakers for the first half of the year. Her first one of the year is a round up of last years speakers so if you're unsure whether to book or not, register for this one [here](#) as it's free!

We love to hear all your news and ideas - it's your society so please let us know what you would like to see happen in 2024 - think workshops, talks, ideas for social evenings etc!

Let's make 2024 our best year yet!

*Lesley*



# NEWS AROUND THE REGIONS

## AUCKLAND/TĀMAKI MAKĀURAU

**Lesley Alexander**

**Sketch and Picnic - Saturday 20th January**

**Where:** Auckland Botanic Gardens

**Time:** 9.30am onwards

**What to bring:** sketchbook, pens, paints - whatever you like to use, chair or rug, hat, your lunch - or you can buy it at the cafe there.

A great chance to meet other members in the Auckland area and chat about all things botanical.

**Rain day - 3rd February**

**Pen and Ink workshop - Saturday 24th Feb**

I will be demonstrating using pen and ink for the Friends of the Auckland Botanic Gardens Art Group. Come along and join us.

**Where:** Friends House in Auckland Botanic Gardens

**Time:** 9.30am for 10am start, finish 12.30pmish

**Cost:** \$10

If you are interested in these or other workshops email me at [contact@lesleyalexanderart.com](mailto:contact@lesleyalexanderart.com)

## TARANAKI/WANGANUI/MANAWATU

**Sandra Morris**

Sandra is Artist in Residence at the Wellington Botanic Gardens and during her time there will be running two workshops.

**Beginners Botanical Watercolours**

**Date:** Sunday 3 March 2024

**Time:** 10.15am – 1.15pm

**Cost:** \$126.85 - all materials included

**Nature Journalling**

**Date:** Sunday 10 March 2024

**Time:** 10.15am -1.15pm

**Cost:** \$126.85 - all materials included

More info [here](#)

Sandra has many more workshops lined up in Auckland, Whanganui and Miranda for 2024 - covering a wide variety of subjects!

**Sandra Morris - [sandra.morris@illustration.co.nz](mailto:sandra.morris@illustration.co.nz)**

## BAY OF PLENTY/TE MOANA-A-TOI

**Sarah Alloway - [alloway.sd@gmail.com](mailto:alloway.sd@gmail.com)**

## HAWKE'S BAY/TE MATAU-A-MĀUI

**Gillian Receveur - [gandtreceveur@extra.co.nz](mailto:gandtreceveur@extra.co.nz)**

## WAIKATO

**Elena Brambilla - [thesewingsailor@gmail.com](mailto:thesewingsailor@gmail.com)**

## WELLINGTON/ WHANGANUI A TARA

**Jane Humble - [jhumble16@gmail.com](mailto:jhumble16@gmail.com)**

## NELSON/WHAKATU

**Janet Marshall - [janet@janetmarshall.co.nz](mailto:janet@janetmarshall.co.nz)**

## NORTH CANTERBURY/HURUNUI

**Elizabeth Yuill Proctor - [elizabethhayp@gmail.com](mailto:elizabethhayp@gmail.com)**

## CHRISTCHURCH/OTAUTAHI

**Lorraine Thompson - [tclthompson@gmail.com](mailto:tclthompson@gmail.com)**

## DUNEDIN/OTEPOTI

**Jane Fitzgerald - [rosscreek@extra.co.nz](mailto:rosscreek@extra.co.nz)**

### Jennifer Duval-Smith - Nature journaling in a conference setting

I recently had the opportunity to expand nature journaling into a new arena. Whereas I normally work with small groups of people who frankly look a lot like me, this time I was asked if I would create a 'Nature Space' for a large event for a much more diverse audience. 'Cutting Edge - Toku tū Moana' is a 900 person conference held annually by DAPAANZ, the organisation which supports people working in the field of addiction prevention and treatment.

The organisers had two main objectives:

1. create a relaxing and inspiring space for conference attendees who would like to have some quiet time away from the bustle of this very 'peopley' event
2. communicate a new self-care practice to help with mindfulness for practitioners working in this very demanding and often stressful field

My concept was to create a 'giant nature table' in a conference room with lots of natural inspiration, books, nature journaling prompts and lovely art materials. There was a lot of foraging of flowers and seed pods from traffic islands and abandoned lots to create a beautiful table! I also created a bookmark with the three main nature journaling prompts on it so that people could take something away as a reminder in case they were not able to absorb everything on the day.



## MEMBERS NEWS cont.....

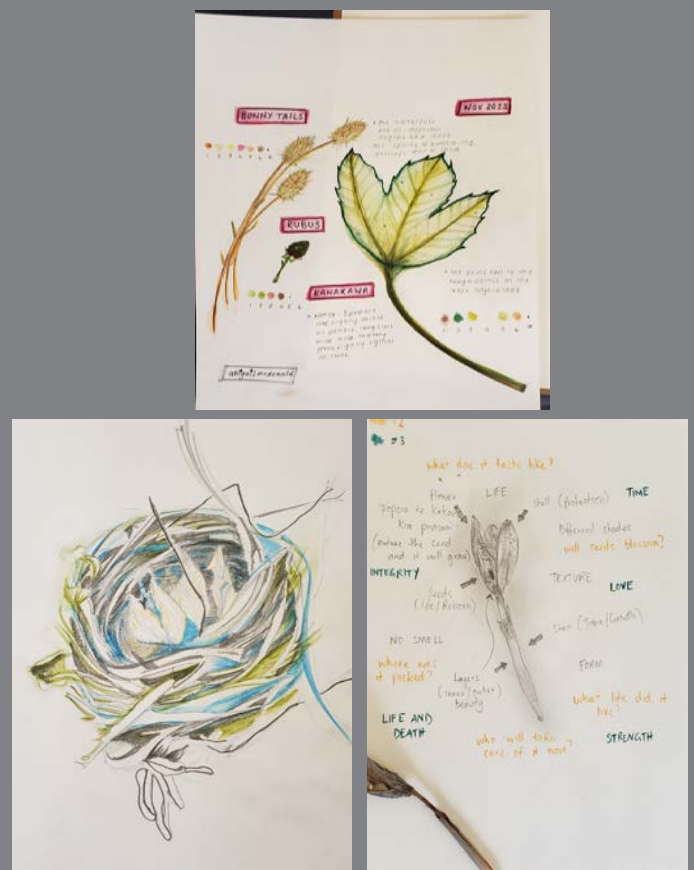
Speaking with participants it was clear that those who engaged with the activity found it a useful break from the intensity of being with so many people together in one space. Some of the work was at the level of creative sketching and nature inspired doodling which has its own benefits. Others engaged deeply with the methodology and produced really thoughtful work which was clearly informed by their personal lived experience and therapeutic backgrounds.

The feedback I received was that attendees could see application for nature journaling in the following ways:-

- As a personal self-care/mindfulness practice
- As an activity they could do with their mokopuna and rangatahi
- An activity they could use with clients and groups
- A bonding workshop for teams who need to take some time out and relax.

It really was a privilege to meet and engage with a range of people from very diverse backgrounds, from art therapists to flaxroots community workers wearing “Don’t meth with me” team t-shirts. The activity led to some really heartfelt and often unexpectedly moving conversations about nature and different perspectives on mindfulness, creativity and life. One thing I observed was that art can bring people back to an earlier point in their lives where things did not feel so complicated and more seemed possible. As artists and as teachers we have the opportunity to model and encourage the expression of creativity in others and I personally find this very inspiring and motivating.

Examples of participants' work



## MEMBERS NEWS cont....

### Katharine Allard

I recently attended an online workshop on making lake pigments, run by Natalie Stopka. It was run over two Sunday sessions with a week in between to try the pigment making process for yourself.

I've attached two photos of the red clover pigment I made - it turned out bright green!

I highly recommend checking out the other courses Natalie has on offer. There are a few more - shorter - online tutorials on making watercolour paints listed on her website here: <https://www.nataliestopka.com/workshops>



### Sandra Morris

Sandra will be Artist in residence at Wellington Botanic Gardens from 1st February to 31st March.

She will be at the gardens Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays, 10am - 3pm so do go along to see her if you can. As part of her residency she will be running two workshops - details on pg 4.

More information about the residency can be found [here](#).



## MEMBERS NEWS cont....

### Jo Ogier

The Canterbury Branch met for an end of year social gathering at The Beach Cafe in Sumner. It was a lovely social event, with a delicious meal and a great opportunity to catch up with everyone and hear what they had been working on.

Just before the lunch I was delighted to have a studio visit from the group as it was near the cafe.



View from Jo's studio



Jo in her studio

It was great to share some of the paintings I have been working on for some time. When we work on our art in solitude, I find it is always a good idea to step back, take another look and get some constructive feedback from those who are seeing it with fresh eyes.



Above and left - Jo explaining her work to the group

The artwork I was showing the group is for an exhibition at the Eastern Southland Art Gallery in Gore scheduled for October 2024.

The aim of the exhibition is to illustrate much of the diverse ecology of the Matura River and its surrounds within the Gore District. I am looking at what would have been present in a pre-European context.

The exhibition will be a lament for what has been lost through the introduction of stop banks, land clearance, heavy industry, urbanisation and some farming practices.

The works are painted on Arches with watercolour, gouache and or liquid acrylic.



## Some close-ups of Jo's work

Detail right showing:

**Bird**

Southern brown kiwi/*Apteryx australis*/Tokoeke, tokoweke

**Reptile**

Tuatara/*Sphenodon punctatus*

**Flora**

Tutu/ *Coriaria arborea* var. *arborea*/ tutu, tāweku, pūhou

Tree nettle/*Urtica ferox*/ongaonga

Umbrella Fern/*Sticherus cunninghami*/waekura, tapuwae kōtuku

Hound's Tongue Fern/*Microsorium pustulatum*/ kōwaowao, pāraharaha

**Insect**

Huhu beetle/*Prionoplus reticularis*/tunga rere, pepe te muimui

Huhu grub/*Prionoplus reticularis*/tunga haere, tunga rākau



Detail below showing:

**Bird**

Kakapo/*Strigops habroptilus*/Kākāpō

**Flora**

Seven finger/*Schefflera digitata*/patē

Lowland totora/*Podocarpus totara*/tōtara

Black pine/*Prumnopitys taxifolia*/matai

White pine/*Dacrydium dacrydioides*/kahikatea, kahika

Red pine/*Dacrydium cupressinum*/rimu



Detail above showing:

**Bird**

White heron/*Ardea modesta*/kōtuku

**River**

Fresh water crayfish/*Paranephrops zealandicus*/Kōura

Upland bully / *Gobio*/ morphus breviceps/tipokopoko or toitoi

Elver – Long Fin Eel/*Anguilla dieffenbachii*/tuna

**Flora**

Red tussock/*Chionochloa rubra*/haumata



# BOTANICAL ART PROMPTS



Wilma Blom -

*'Perhaps just enough ink to qualify for Inktober. Babiana angustifolia from Waikumete Cemetery, Auckland.'*



Lesley Alexander -

*'I sketched this Nikau, *Rhopalostylis sapida* silhouetted against blue sky while walking through Balls Clearing Scenic Reserve in Hawkes Bay. Ink over watercolour wash - to be completed!'*



Michelle Watson used the November prompt - 'Edible' to sketch these vegetables and fruit.



## BOTANICAL ART PROMPTS cont....

December's Prompt  
Christmas & Summer  
or  
Birthday Flowers:  
Holly, Narcissus,  
Rose & Honeysuckle  
or  
Any NZ native  
beginning with 'D'

#botanicalartnzdecemberprompt



Flo Pirotais used 'Holly' from the December prompt to paint this lovely holly leaves and berries in watercolour.



Michelle Watson used 'D' for December to sketch these Foxgloves - *Digitalis purpurea*. Pen and wash.

January's Prompt  
SALAD, BEACH, RIVER  
or  
Birthday Flowers:  
Carnation  
Larkspur  
or  
Any plant with a 'J'  
in it's name

#botanicalartnzjanuaryprompt

Remember the prompts come out on the 1st of each month, with an email reminder so check your inbox! They will also be on our website and social media.

I would love to see lots of your sketches etc so don't forget to either use the hashtag or send photos of them to me at [newsletter.basnzinc@gmail.com](mailto:newsletter.basnzinc@gmail.com) - Ed

## BOOK REVIEW - JANE HUMBLE

### ‘FLORA, CELEBRATING OUR BOTANICAL WORLD’.

Editors: Carlos Lehnebach, Claire Regnault, Rebecca Rice, Isaac Te Awa, Rachel Yates.  
Publisher Te Papa Press



I was delighted when Lesley suggested I should report to BASNZ about the launch of this wonderful new book published in November by Te Papa Press. As volunteers in the Herbarium at Te Papa we had spent several coffee breaks looking at proofs trying to work out the identities of some of the subjects, though not those by Botanical Artists of course!

The evening of the launch was a colourful gathering to mark a huge collaborative effort across many Te Papa Departments. Guests representing Pacifica wore wonderful flowers in their hair, guest wore appropriately colourful clothes and the venue was full of flowers from some gorgeous local gardens. I am afraid my photographs don't do it justice.

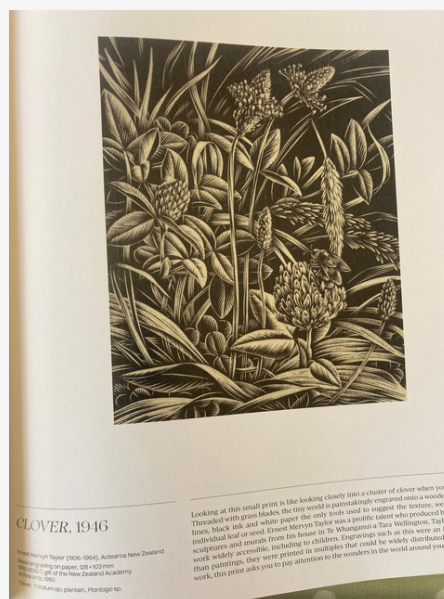


## BOOK REVIEW cont....

The one note of great sadness was the acknowledgement of the recent death of one of the authors, Dr. Patrick Brownsey, a fern specialist who joined the National Museum in 1977 and served as Senior Curator Botany 2005-2011. Patrick was a Te Papa research fellow at the time of his death. Te Papa's Botanical collections date from 1865 when the Colonial Museum was founded. Some of the first collections were ferns from Wellington and several specimens of plants of economic importance were donated by Kew Botanic Gardens in England. Highlights of the collection include specimens from the 1769-70 expedition by Captain Cook to New Zealand and a nineteenth century collection of ferns by King Tawhaio, Ngati Mahuta.

But 'Flora', celebrates the relationship between people and plants revealed through all of Te Papa's collections, Maori Art, History, Pacific Cultures, Décor, Design, Photography, not just Botany. It includes stories of the many ways in which we have used and loved plants throughout history and their ongoing importance in our lives.

The chapters are not arranged in any systematic order and this spontaneity adds to the wonder of the scope of the collections and emphasises the extent of our connections to the plant kingdom. Each section is introduced by richly informed essays though 'Flora' can be thoroughly enjoyed as a picture book.



There are fine examples of early New Zealand botanic artists throughout 'Flora', some better known than others. It would be great to think that because of this book these artists will become better known! I think this is a great addition to the commentary of our history, a joy for the casual browser and an inspiration for any botanical illustrator for those moments when one's preoccupations with plant detail are seeming a little obsessive!

## ZENTANGLE WITH SUZY ABBOTT

A review by Lisa Dickson

**Our last social evening of 2023 included a session by Suzy Abbott on Christmas Zentangle (thank you Suzy!). It sparked some questions from members about Zentangle – what it is and where it originated from, so I put together these wee thoughts.**



Zentangle inspired cards by Lisa Dickson

Zentangle was founded in 2004 by Rick Roberts and Maria Thomas (a professional calligrapher). Often described as a meditative art form, they combined forces to come up with a series of repetitive patterns that were accessible for anyone to be able to be creative.

Zentangle is perfect for all those people who say “I can’t draw” or “I don’t have any artistic ability” or “I don’t have time”. It provides an artistic, mark-making process that is simple and easy to follow, requiring minimal tools.

The philosophy of Zentangle resolves around one simple, copyrighted sentence – “Anything is possible one stroke at a time” and one idea - “There are no mistakes.” It is designed to help us to focus less on perfection and more on the act of creating.

‘Error’ can be called on to help influence the work, and will often become an idea in its own right. Zentangle is often considered “yoga for the brain”.

The action of repetitive pattern making is considered to have a range of benefits including calming and stress relieving effects, improvements to concentration and coordination, relaxation and inner focus and feelings of achievement (a traditional zentangle tile can be completed in a lunch break). The use of repetitive patterns often removes the fear of failure that drawing can bring about.

As an artist, Zentangle can help in a myriad of ways, including improving pen and line work, design skills, developing awareness of light and shade and teaching the value of creative aimlessness. Tangling also teaches us how to incorporate what seem to be “mistakes” into the overall work and how to adjust our vision to include imperfections.

More information can be found at <https://zentangle.com/>



Zentangle inspired Christmas trees by Vicki Jones (L) and Wilma Blom (R)

## FEATURED ARTIST - DORA BAKER



Dora Baker

### Who or what inspired you to start painting?

I have always loved to draw and did so at primary school. The oldest drawings I still have are in my school recipe book from primary school, where I did detailed illustrations of the ingredients for each recipe!!! However, life got in the way, and I did not really begin again until I semi-retired in 2010 and was watching Susan Worthington paint the large leaf rhododendrons at Pukeiti.

My goal in retirement was to start painting again and Susan threw out the challenge and then the mentoring as well. But there is no doubt my love of gardening, nature, plants, birds, and animals plays a very significant part as well.

Finally, the background from my life of nursing with the realisation of the need to recognise the requirement to go back to plants and look for the next generation of medication is essential. And before we destroy any more!!!

### Do you have a botanical hero?

Yes, my mother!!

It was her love of growing things that started me off as a child. Growing up in the country and on a farm, nature was part of our lives. For so many years my camera was my means of capturing what I saw, as I did not have the time to paint. Then many years of being married to a plantsman and surrounded by botanists, nurserymen, dendrologists, plant breeders etc and co-leading several garden tours overseas, including Kew where my husband had trained, meant I absorbed a lot of knowledge from these people.

Believe you me if I painted, or quilted, a flower with the stigma, for example, pointing the wrong way it was very smartly pointed out! And unpicking a firmly, satin stitched one to correct it, was not easy!!...

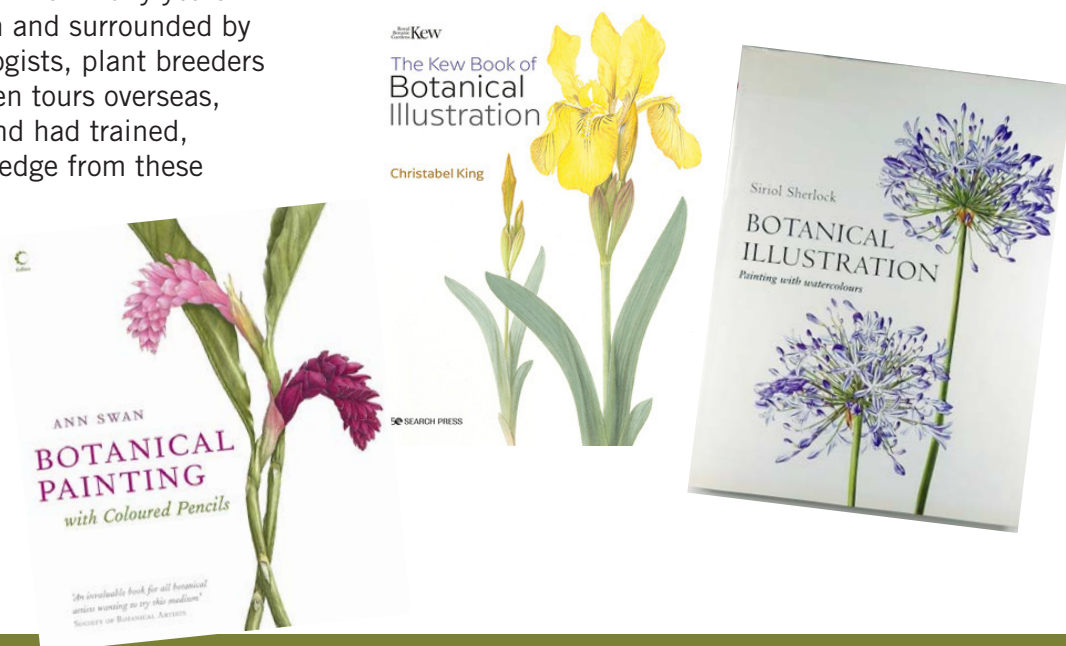
### Who are your favourite botanical artists?

As for botanical artists, I would have to say Susan (as above) and Fanny Osbourne, because I fell in love with one of her paintings as a child when it hung above my grandparent's fireplace. I have a book about her work and plan on going to Auckland to see her work in the museum there. And Gillian Rankin the amazing botanical tutor from who I learnt so much, over recent years.

### Is there one book you would particularly recommend?

There are three I especially refer to. One is for colour pencil, and one is watercolour and one general.

1. The Kew Book of Botanical Illustration – by Christabel King
2. Botanical Illustration, Painting with Watercolours – by Siriol Sherlock
3. Botanical Painting with Coloured pencils – by Ann Swan



## FEATURED ARTIST - DORA BAKER cont....

### What prompted you to use colour pencil?

My start with coloured pencils occurred due to our travels overseas and the big frowns I received when I was caught washing my paint brushes in precious bottled drinking water! When you are up mountains higher than our Mt Cook, there were not a lot of readily available puddles to use either... As many of the hillsides were nearly vertical, keeping things (like water pots) upright was also difficult. Hence the move to another medium.

### Would you share a picture of your workstation? (I LOVE other people's messy tables!)



### Which artists do you find most useful to follow online?

I don't follow any specific artists online. Just don't have time for this. But I do look at artists tutorials as I have time.

### What is your favourite paper to work with?

For coloured pencils I have always used Winsor & Newton – drawing and sketching paper. It's a smooth surface cartridge paper, heavy weight 220gsm. It's not white but off white and especially good for botanical work. Gillian recommended it for us, and we imported it for years, getting supplies in before she came over each year. HOWEVER, they are no longer making this paper, Grrrrr....

We are experimenting with others to find suitable colour pencil paper as good.

For Watercolour I am experimenting with several at the moment and one new one that has just come on the market. Have yet to confirm it's properties. Have used it once and it is very promising. It's the Artgecko range made in Great Britain.

### What one piece of advice would you give to a new artist?

Always have a go. Try new ideas, see what happens. I always say to everyone drawing for the first time and to people coming back to painting, "there is not such things as 'wrong' in art". But I do explain that sometimes if you wish to achieve a particular effect then there is a certain way to achieve this. If it isn't working out leave it and put it in your 'UFO' (unfinished objects) pile!! Came back to it later when your skill set has increased, and you could be amazed at what can happen... The result good or otherwise is in the "eye of the beholder".!!! We all like something different. Don't be frightened to push boundaries. Not everyone will like it, but someone will, one day.



## FEATURED ARTIST - DORA BAKER cont....

### Would you share a picture of your favourite work.

I have attached 2 that are very special to me as I know I achieved that level at which I was happy with them! The 'Abutilons' are watercolour, and the kingfishers are coloured pencil.



Kingfishers', Colour pencil, Dora Baker

### Do you have a special 'hack' or trick which works for you?

I have made some wooden 'blocks' to place under my canvases when I want to draw on them so that I don't stretch them as I do so. This is especially important if I'm transferring a drawing from my sketch paper to the canvas, and some pressure is required. I have several different sizes of light weight ply on 4 'feet' made from wood blocks, high enough to support the canvas level with of the frame.



'Abutilons', watercolour, Dora Baker

### What are your plans for the future

Now that my house renovations are nearing the end, I hope to have much more time for my art and am working towards this goal. Growing so much of my own produce does take time from my days, but also provides inspiration for my art. First the new growth, then the flowers followed by the fruit and finally the seeds, gives plenty of inspiring raw material for drawing.

Key projects I am working on are a 'Bee Aware' series focusing on the plight of our native bees. And starting again on my series of works for Rongoa Maori. This is work I started on some time ago with the nurses at Tui Ora in New Plymouth but again life got in the way, and it stopped for quite a while.

## COLOUR CHARTS - DORA BAKER

Colour charts aren't new, but Dora has come up with her own version which fulfills her needs of being able to choose colours when traveling.

Dora explains why she needs colour charts and shares her process of making them.

*'Somewhere in the past I saw a version of this idea, but I cannot remember where.'*

Gillian (the Brisbane Art tutor who's 6-day classes I attended for 10 years) always said to make a colour chart on the same paper we were using to do our painting on, because as you know the paper will influence the colour of the pencil used.

However, making a colour chart for each painting takes time, and when I was travelling that was something I did not have, and so I looked for a solution. I needed to quickly be able to match colours to plants while on the move, literally at times. Those buses!

Also other colours surrounding influence the one you are looking at, hence the hole in each colour strip. Put the hole over the petal or leaf (or whatever) to get a better colour match.

### Process:

Using the Excel program on my computer I made up the charts and printed them off on the paper I was drawing on. I found this thicker paper went through the back of my Brother printer using the 'photo paper' slot OK. It will not go through the normal trays.

I have the full 120 Polychromous and Prismacolor pencil sets, but only have a part set of Albrecht Durer Watercolour ones. However, I have made the full chart of all the numbers so that as I get more pencils it will be easy to just add them in without having to make up a whole new colour chart. Hence the gaps you can see in some charts in the photo.



Dora's colour swatches

I graduate the colours across the strip to give a range of values for each pencil. The colours on each card personally suit how I use my colours rather than follow the manufacturers' range. The card has the pencils number, name & colour swatch across it. I have just redone the Polychromous charts as I was shocked recently to find out just how much they had faded. But not surprising really, considering how often they have followed me around the world over the last 10 years. And I must add with little care in keeping them out of strong light. Lesson learnt! All my charts are now in a double plastic snaplock bags with a thick paper layer in between to keep them out of the light but easy to transport and keep dry.

Paper: I used the W/N cartridge paper last time, but this time have used the Fabriano one that I'm currently using. More importantly is to use a paper that is the same colour as you usually use. I use slightly off-white, which means even if I use a different brand the same colour chart will work. If you use pure white, use that etc. I used white watercolour paper for those pencils.

## IT'S ALL GREEK (AND LATIN) TO ME - WILMA BLOM

**When it comes to species names many of us – scientists included – find the two-part Latin (binomial) names difficult to negotiate and remember.**

**So why have we persisted with the system? Why not just use common names? After all as Shakespeare's Juliet said: "What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet." In other words, a rose is still a rose, regardless of what it is called. Or is it?**

Taking the genus *Rosa*, it contains over 320 distinct species, not to mention the thousand or more varieties. Then there are the rock rose (*Cistus*), winter rose (*Helleborus*), primrose (*Primula*) and rose campion (*Lychnis*). All with rose in the common name, but none of which belong to the genus *Rosa*. So when we use the name rose, which plant are we actually referring to?

Or take an example from the animal kingdom. Which fish do we mean when we use the name bream? This common name has been used for species within the genera *Abramis*, *Acanthopagrus*, *Argyrops*, *Blicca*, *Brama*, *Chilotilapia*, *Etelis*, *Lepomis*, *Gymnocranius*, *Lethrinus*, *Nemipterus*, *Pagrus*, *Pharyngochromis*, *Rhabdosargus*, *Scolopsis*, and *Serranochromis*. Granted they are all fish, but many are not even distantly related.

The major attraction of the binomial scientific naming system is that it avoids this ambiguity of common names. A species can only ever have one accepted scientific name, consisting of a genus



'Rosa The Bishop' Photo credit: W Blom



'Carl Linnaeus', by Alexander Roslin, 1775 (oil on canvas, Gripsholm Castle). Image: National Museum, Sweden.

name and a species name (more of that later). It is a unique name that can be used worldwide, and which people can use to definitively identify a species independent of common or local names.

Carl Linnaeus (1707 – 1778) is credited with introducing the use of binomial names as part of his biological classification (Linnaean taxonomy) for both plants and animals. In fact, he was not the first to do so, as he built on the work of his predecessors Gaspard (1560 – 1624) and Johann Bauhin (1541 – 1613). However, he was the first to formalise the naming of the natural world within a hierarchical system of three kingdoms, the animal, vegetable and mineral kingdoms. These were further subdivided into class, order, genus and species.

As Linnaeus himself is supposed to have said:

*God created, Linnaeus organized.*

## IT'S ALL GREEK (AND LATIN) TO ME cont....

Although today we mostly recognise eight ranks for living organisms, we still use his system of binomial nomenclature. However, the naming of species (including fossil ones) is now strictly governed by a series of internationally agreed codes. The most widely used of these are the code for animals (ICZN) and the one for algae, fungi, and plants (ICNafp).

But why do we use Latin for scientific names? I guess we can ultimately blame the Romans. Within the Roman Empire, societies had largely oral traditions and local languages and dialects remained in use throughout. However, Latin was the lingua franca especially for written communication, such as administration and legislation. This system was adopted by the Roman Catholic Church as Christianity spread throughout the early Roman Empire. Although spoken Latin morphed into a series of new romance languages and dialects, by medieval times Latin as used by the early Romans lacked native speakers. However, a variant continued to be used as universal language in written form, particularly by the Church.

As the church was also the primary domain of European scholarship, by the time Linnaeus devised his system to classify organisms a form of Latin had been the language of scholars for many centuries. It would therefore have been perfectly normal and expected for him to continue on in the same vein.



*'Metrosideros excelsa'*  
Photo credit - W. Blom

**“Like all language, zoological nomenclature reflects the history of those who have produced it, and is the result of varying and conflicting practices. Some of our nomenclatural usage has been the result of ignorance, of vanity, obstinate insistence on following individual predilections, much, like that of language in general, of national customs, prides, and prejudices.**

**Ordinary languages grow spontaneously in innumerable directions; but biological nomenclature has to be an exact tool that will convey a precise meaning for persons in all generations”.**

J. Chester Bradley. Preface to the 1st edition of the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature, 1961.

As for the rules on writing binomial names there are a few difference between construction of botanical and zoological names.

For both codes the first part of the name consists of the **genus** name, and the second part is the **species** name, and also frequently referred to as the species epithet. Both are written in italics, with the initial letter of the genus name always capitalised and the species name always entirely in lower case. So *Metrosideros excelsa* (pohutukawa).

## IT'S ALL GREEK (AND LATIN) TO ME cont....

When hand-written, the name should, strictly speaking, be underlined to indicate italics, e.g., *Homo sapiens* (humans). This is probably a hang-over from the days when cursive script was more common. Underlining of species names became the convention to distinguish these from the main body of the text.

The abbreviation sp. is used when a species is not known, or need not be referred to. However, it is never italicised, e.g., *Metrosideros* sp.

Many binomial names are also followed by an unitalicised name and date, e.g. the domestic cat, *Felis catus* Linnaeus, 1758. Zoologists and botanists do things slightly differently when it comes to these.

For animal species these record the author (or authority) of the species. This is the person who was first to publish the species' description and their name is always written out in full. The date refers to the year in which the description was first published. If the date appears in parentheses, it means the name was revised and the species epithet was shifted to a different genus to reflect a changed understanding of relationships between species. As example, our fish snapper, was first described by Forster in 1801 and he placed it in the genus *Labrus*. So it was first named *Labrus auratus* Forster, 1801. However, it was later considered to be more closely related to species in the genus *Pagrus* and was moved to this genus. It is therefore now referred to by the scientific name of *Pagrus auratus* (Forster, 1801).

On the other hand, the botanists do not necessarily write out an authority's name in full. Instead they truncate polysyllabic names according to a list of standard abbreviations (published in the International Plant Names Index), and they do not add a date. For example, for our kohuhu the scientific name is *Pittosporum tenuifolium* Gaertn.

When a name is revised botanists add the name of the reviser (and occasionally the date of revision) after the name of the authority. So our kauri has gone from *Damarra australis* D. Don to *Agathis australis* (D. Don) Loudon. This means the species was originally placed in the genus *Dammara* by David Don, a Victorian Scottish botanist, but later moved to the genus *Agathis* by another Scottish botanist and his contemporary, John Claudius Loudon.



'Kauri Branchlet', watercolour, Wilma Blom

If you would like to know more about binomial nomenclature I can recommend Wikipedia [[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/B\\_inomial\\_nomenclature](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/B_inomial_nomenclature)] as a good starting point.

*Wilma Blom is a scientist who worked in the natural sciences for most of her working life and who was until recently the Curator, Marine Invertebrates at Auckland Museum. She retired at the end of 2023 to pursue other things, including botanical and other art.*

# THE LIFE, TIMES AND WORK OF MARIA SIBYLLA MERIAN

by Jane Fitzgerald

**Maria Sibylla Merian (1647-1717) was an artist and a naturalist. She has been the subject of many contemporary papers and texts, referred to as the “Butterfly Woman” (Campetella 2020), a “Woman on the Margins” (Davis, N. 1997), and “The Women who turned Science into Art” (Oliveira 2018), reflecting the breadth of interest in her by scholars and writers of art, history, and science.**



The 17th century was a time when females were constrained in the genre, medium, and scope of artistic work. Womens admission to scholarly institutions was also limited, particularly in science. However, early in her life Maria was blessed with an extended family of artists and artisans and was exposed to, and undoubtedly influenced by many artists whose work she saw. As a young woman, this compensated for some of the cultural barriers that existed outside of her family in the first decades of her life. It is difficult to know which of her interests – painting or the natural history of insects was the most dominant in her mind, but some of her early journals suggest the study of insects was her primary focus, with painting and journal writing being the means to communicate her observations.

As a scientist, and botanical art student, I was attracted to Maria’s life story and her ability to work across different fields, challenging theories and social rules on the way. For Maria, was the study of art and nature inseparable, and what was her primary interest? I was curious to discover how she managed to navigate the cultural barriers for female artists in the 17th-18th century, her use of technology, and to examine her painting style and compositions throughout her life. Finally, I was interested in the unique contribution she made to both science and art while living, and equally after her death in 1717.

## MARIE SIBYLLA MERIAN cont....

### LIFE, FAMILY AND FRANKFURT.

Maria Merian was born in Frankfurt in 1647 to Matthaeus Merian the Elder and Johanna Sibylla Heim. Matthaeus Merian had been married before and his first wife had died leaving two boys - Merian the younger, and Casper, who became Maria's older step brothers. Matthaeus Merian, an engraver, printer and publisher died in 1650 when Maria was just 3 years old. Maria's mother remarried a flower painter, engraver and publisher - Jacob Marrel. Maria, in her youth learned watercolour techniques in the still life genre from Marrel, her stepfather. He had studied painting with George Flegel, a famous painter in Germany. Her stepfather also taught Maria how to prepare canvasses or vellum, mix pigments and print in colour with various layering techniques. Maria's introduction to painting and publishing by her stepfather and stepbrothers was an important grounding for her as an artist and eased her entry into the artistic world outside of her home in Germany.

Soon, Maria began teaching young noblewomen how to paint of flowers and insects, using watercolours. The use of oils by women was not practical because oil paintings by women were not able to be sold in Germany at the time (Tomasi, 2008). Her two stepbrothers who took over Mathaeus Merian the elder's business, had specialized skills that undoubtedly increased her knowledge and skills in engraving, eventually contributing in part to the production of some plates in her most significant book - "The Metamorphosis of the Insects of Suriname" (Van Delft & Mulder, 2012). Casper specialised in prints and his etching and commercial skills led to various roles making prints for ceremonial occasions and royal visits in Frankfurt (Reitsma, 2012). Mathaeus, the younger, was a skilled painter, employed by the Count of Nassau-Idstein to paint and record plants in the Castle Garden. He moved amongst aristocratic circles providing natural connections for Maria. Most of the paintings of this period depicted plants and some insects in an ornamental style.



Figure 1. Flower Garland and Insects (Maria Merian, 1730)

### LIFE, FAMILY, AND NUREMBURG

In 1665, Maria aged 18, married Johaan Graff, a fellow student and apprentice of her stepfather. She moved with him to his home in Nurenberg and there had two daughters - Johanna Helena and Dorothea Maria, born ten years apart. A particular advantage of this city was the university, herbal and botanical garden in Altdorf, which she was able to visit and learn about new plants. With her husband's skills and access to copper engraving she was able to write, print and publish her own work in 1675, the first being the "New Book of Flowers". This was designed as a book of models or designs of flowers for her pupils to use for embroidery and painting, common activities for young noble women (Reitsma, 2012). Garlands of flowers were depicted on the front cover of this book and a similar garland painting shown below influenced one of my own paintings, combining flowers and a vignette.

## MARIE SIBYLLA MERIAN cont....

Maria continued to collect, examine, and paint insects, especially caterpillars noting each stage of development and behaviour, whilst feeding and breeding them. Maria's home housed many specimens (alive and dead), food, tools, and materials she used for drawing and painting. Insects began to feature more in her paintings. Caterpillars were shown feeding on specific plants, and the stages of both plant and insect development were depicted in one painting, "truncated in time" (Freedburg, 2008). Plants were seen as a food source or host, secondary to the primary subject – the insect. This change in her focus culminated in a further publication in 1679, Maria's first book on insect Metamorphosis – "The Wonderful transformation of caterpillars and their particular plant nourishment" depicted in image below.



Figure 2. Metamorphosis of Tigermoth with Ichneumon wasps (Maria Merian, 1679)

These years in Nurenburg were very productive. Maria's two daughters also became painters in their own right, and assisted her in all aspects of her work. Maria began to establish herself as a naturalistic illustrator providing a "faithful copy of the natural world" (Tomasi, 2008), in parallel with the scientific revolution. An Englishman - Francis Bacon (1561-1628) had been promoting the study of nature and experimentation - a new 'naturalistic philosophy' (Klein, 2008). This philosophy encouraged the use of technology to develop objects such as the lens to see, and tools to measure, allowing art to replicate the natural world, a shift from earlier painting of religious icons. Maria developed a new method of printing, called the counterproof. This technique began with a one sheet printed from a copper plate etching and then this was placed face down on a 2nd one producing an image in the same orientation as the original work. This proved to be more attractive to buyers as ink was softer creating an image that was very similar to the original, once coloured.

Maria's paintings of insects were becoming very popular. In 1683, Joachim von Sandrart, a painter living in Nurenburg publicly acknowledged her work by writing about her tremendous knowledge of caterpillars, flies, and spiders as well as her competence running a household (Reitsma, 2012). Subsequently, Maria was commissioned by the Margrave of Baden - Baden to decorate an army tent with birds and flowers (Wettengl, 1998). This valuable commission broke new ground for a woman painter of the 17th century when expectations were for smaller paintings and a "lighter touch" (Tomasi, 2008).

Maria was not alone working on caterpillar Metamorphosis. Goedart and Swammerdam were also studying insect metamorphosis (Heard 2016). However, Maria's work was convincing and unique in the detailed information about the plant and insect interactions drawn from 'live' observations, and study over many months. Maria had established herself as a working artist, and defined herself by her novel approach and style of painting.



## MARIE SIBYLLA MERIAN cont....

After an industrious 16 years in Nuremburg, a family event altered Maria's direction.

### LIFE, FAMILY, FRANKFURT, AND WIEWARD

Maria's stepfather- Jacob Marrel died in 1681. Maria, her husband and daughters travelled back to Frankfurt to care for Maria's widowed mother Johanna Sybilla Heim. Here, Maria worked on her second caterpillar book extending her earlier findings. At this time, Maria had some marital difficulties with her husband, Johann Graff. She decided to leave Frankfurt and live in a Labadist Community in Wieward - Friesland, encouraged by her stepbrother Casper who was currently living there. This community differed to her previous homes. There were distinctive social rules imposed by the leader Jean de Labadie, a reformed Calvinist. Money and personal possessions were shared and certain activities were not permitted, one of which was art. Art was viewed as 'vain amusement' (Reitsma, 2012).

However, to Maria's good fortune she was permitted to continue with her work on insect and plant communities, now known as 'ecology'. In Waltha Castle she continued studying the metamorphosis of insects and became interested in frog and amphibian metamorphosis as well. Metamorphosis was perceived by the religious community as a metaphor for how humans transform into butterflies, thereby becoming closer to god. Her husband Johaan tried to reconcile their conflict by following Maria there, but was unsuccessful and left. They became divorced later in 1692.

Unfortunately, the community experienced hardship after many members succumbed to an infectious disease. The community broke up as a result of widespread illness and lack of funds. In 1769 Maria left Wieward with her daughters and mother to live in Amsterdam, at the end of the Golden Age when Dutch trade, science and art were very prominent in Europe.

### LIFE, FAMILY, AMSTERDAM AND SURINAME

Amsterdam offered Maria intellectual exchange, visits to collectors' homes with elegantly displayed rare species, exposure to botanists, and first-hand experience of many exotic specimens arriving at the busy port. Collectors in Amsterdam were quite diverse, encompassing many ordinary people, as well as wealthy aristocrats. Perhaps an abundant supply of 'naturalia' from the sailing traders meant the prices were affordable to many people of variable means.

This dynamic trading port, along with the Labadist's link to the community of Suriname, led to her decision to go on an exploratory trip there, to further her work on Metamorphosis. Family support helped to arrange the trip as Dorothea's fiancée was a merchant trader. By then Maria had spent 8 years in Amsterdam.

Maria, aged 52, and Dorothea aged 21, sailed to Suriname along a wild coastline in June 1699, an expensive journey of six weeks and funded by the sale of some of her earlier paintings and collections of preserved insects and dried plants. Maria was a trader and had become commercially savvy. Maria, Dorothea and two servants landed in Paramaribo, a small village near the Governors house. Fortunately, the house they lived in had a garden that was surrounded by trees and crops. The local people were mostly helpful once they gained respect for Maria, and shared their knowledge of plants and animals, describing their medicinal and culinary uses, naming, and alerting her to poisonous species. She visited tropical plantations as well as the Labadist sugar plantation assisted by slaves. Sugar was an important trading crop for the Suriname and return journeys were laden with sugar.

Maria's paintings and compositions differed from the earlier caterpillar book reflecting a dynamic quality, possibly related to the range of insects and their often unusual behaviors. Maria's compositions

## MARIE SIBYLLA MERIAN cont....

were sometimes looser, or more flamboyant. This may have reflected working under time pressure and extreme temperatures, or been a deliberate change in style. Tropical plants and insects had strong vibrant colours with often larger forms, curves, curls, tendrils and appendages, rendering a bolder yet flowing composition.

The detail and finishing of the leaves and stems in a few of her paintings while in Suriname were less convincing, but again Maria could have been focusing on what was new, rather than plants she had seen before. The occasional inaccuracy in the plant subjects contrasted to the precision and detail of the insects which were life size and exquisite (Reitsma 2012). The painting below illustrates some of the finer aspects of Maria's composition and style.



Figure 3. Branch of Pomegranate With Lantern Fly and Cicada ( Plate 48, Merian, 2017).

Here, the insects are painted precisely capturing the delicacy of the wings and beautiful patterned markings. This composition seems more controlled than others at the time, with the elegant

curved line of the branch and flowers, and three insects in the air appearing to be moving towards the flowers to feed on, creating the sense of movement and interaction between the plants and insects.

However, Maria's visual depiction and identification of the green fly or cicada with the snout, seen on the lower pomegranate, was controversial. Maria, in her textual information accompanying this Plate 49, recorded the *"beetle had a rather long snout at the front of the head and..... on 20 May they (the beetles) lay down and the skin erupted on their back and green flies emerged with translucent wings."* Maria reports that the *"local Indians assure her that the flies develop into lantern dragons"* developing the same snout. This view was disputed by scholars soon after the book was published on returning to Amsterdam. In their comments they stated the two depicted insects were two separate species, a cicada and a lanternfly. The green fly or cicada with a snout resting on the flower was not an immature lanternfly and the entomologists referred to it as an "artificial insect". While this might be seen as a flaw in Maria's interpretation of what she observed over time, many of her findings and related images have been verified as botanically or entomologically accurate.

A further painting by Maria's of a spider devouring a bird - Plate 18 (Merian 2012), was also challenged and deemed incorrect after the original book was published in 1705. However in this example, Maria's depiction of the spiders behaviour was found to be correct by Henry Bates later in 1863 (Klein, 2017). These large spiders do devour small birds. The debates may have reflected a degree of jealousy or competition. What remains, is that this novel work was the first longitudinal study of insect and plant interactions of numerous species in their own habitats, that many Europeans had never seen before.

Maria returned to Amsterdam from Suriname in 1701 due to ill health, and it seems she recovered gradually but not completely. Over the next four years Maria and her daughters fulfilled the

## MARIE SIBYLLA MERIAN cont....

expectations of subscribed buyers by completing *The Metamorphosis of Insects in Suriname*, publishing the text in 1705. Few, if any were disappointed and the work was widely praised. In August 1711 her work was shown in a journal - *Memoirs of Literature* stating "The great industry and generosity of Mrs Merian cannot be sufficiently commended" (Heard, 2016). Maria died in 1717, and in her will gave her two daughters complete authority to choose what to do with her remaining paintings and possessions.

### CONCLUSIONS

Maria was adept at finding ways of achieving her ambitions, whether sourcing technology that enhanced the value of her work, or connecting with key scholars - Petiver and Connelin. Linnaeus, a distinguished botanist, later christened nine species of butterflies, two of beetles, and six plant species with her name. Soon after her Suriname book, Mark Catesby (1682- 1749)

published a book on the Natural History of Carolina, Georgia and Florida adopting Merian's style of depicting relationships between plants and insects in his art, reflecting her international influence.

I believe that Maria's interest in plant, insect, and amphibian interactions were her primary focus. Her paintings and descriptions from the field became a very effective way to communicate her ecological findings with beautiful images depicting lifecycles. Maria was capable of rigorous discussions about her work and while some inaccuracies in her work occurred, I believe Maria was motivated by scientific accuracy and truth. Her wider family, and their connections were crucial to her development as a confident artist and ecologist. Maria was an extraordinary artist, and her written descriptions and stories accompanying the artistic works add another dimension, showing the extent of her knowledge acquired from what she saw, heard, and felt in an exotic, but challenging tropical setting.

**See more of Marie Sibylla Merian's work in the Royal collection [here](#)**

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## INTERNET LINKS – Elizabeth Yuill Proctor

This issue I decided to take a trip through YouTube. There is so much useful information on there - along with rubbish of course. It can be like a worm hole trapping you if you follow link to link to link! Click on the images to see the videos.



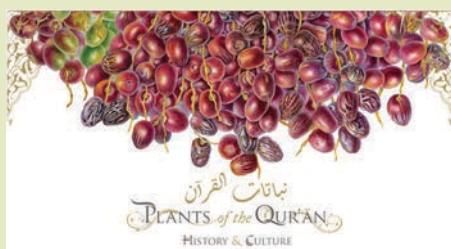
This one is by Oliver Pyle who is predominantly a landscape artist, but the exercises will work across genres as a nice warm up or for those who are at the start of their Botanical Art journey as this video gives some good tips.

Diane Sutherland, who has visited NZ a few times and run classes here for us, shows how to make your own Concertina Sketchbook. The advantage of doing this is that you get to use your favourite papers. This is a great way to start making your own journals.



Fancy trying a different medium with your botanical art? Wendy Hollander shows you how to get started with coloured pencils. She makes it look so easy!

Sandrine Maugy is another well known botanical artist. These are 13 of her tips to improve your work.



Internationally recognised botanical artist, Sue Wickison is one of our newer Full Members. It's well worth revisiting her Plants of the Qur'an project.

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

See page 4 for further details about these events.

### AUCKLAND

**Saturday 20th January -**

Sketch and Picnic

**Where:** Auckland Botanic Gardens

**Time:** 9.30 onwards

**Rain day - 3rd February**

**Saturday 24th Feb -**

Pen and Ink workshop -

**Where:** Friends House in Auckland Botanic Gardens

**Time:** 9.30 for 10am start, finish 12.30ish

### WELLINGTON

**Sunday 3 March -**

Beginners Botanical Watercolours

**Where:** Wellington Botanic Gardens

**Time:** 10.15 am - 1.15pm

**Sunday 10th March -**

Nature Journalling

**Where:** Wellington Botanic Gardens

**Time:** 10.15 am - 1.15pm

**AGM - Monday 6th May**  
**Zoom 7pm**  
**Speaker to be confirmed**

Finally, a HUGE thank you to -

Sandra Morris, Jennifer Duval-Smith, Dora Baker, Flo Pirotais, Michelle Watson, Lesley Alexander, Suzy Abbott, Elizabeth Yuill Proctor, Katharine Allard, Jo Ogier, Wilma Blom, Lisa Dickson, Jane Humble and Jane Fitzgerald.

Without your contributions and proof reading skills, it would be a very slim edition indeed!



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*Quarterly newsletter of the Botanical Art Society of New Zealand*

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