

President

Lesley Alexander

Secretary

Lisa Dickson

Treasurer

Elizabeth Yuill Proctor

Committee

Lorraine Thompson
Jennifer Duval-Smith
Janet Marshall
Sandra Morris
Suzi Pearce
Gillian Receveur
Jane Zimmerman

Regional Reps

Chch - Lorraine Thompson
Hurunui - Suzi Pearce
Nelson - Janet Marshall
Wellington - Jane Humble
Taranaki/Wanganui/
Manawatu -
Sandra Morris
Hawkes Bay - Gillian
Receveur
Auckland - Lesley
Alexander

Newsletter Editors

Elizabeth Yuill Proctor
Suzy Abbott

Welcome to our Spring issue!

Welcome to our jam-packed Spring Newsletter! Sadly some members continue to be in lock down, but hopefully that gives them more time for painting. Spring has been slow to arrive here in Hanmer Springs but now all the blossoms are out and we have a clear blue sky. Roll on summer.

We have three **new members** this issue. Jacqueline Hocquard (Nelson area) and Wilma Blom (Auckland) are new Full Members and Stephanie Mason a new Associate member in the North Island.

I am thrilled with all the articles arriving from our members. If you have anything you want to share please contact the Newsletter team at newsletter.basnzinc@gmail.com - please and thank you. This newsletter is only as good as your contributions make it.

In this issue is a brief look at our **beginnings** with **Irene Blair**, who was with the Society before it even became a Society. Dianne Smith (our first President under the old Society name) had the vision and drive to get things rolling but sadly died before the transition from The Canterbury Botanical Art Group into the Botanical Art Society of New Zealand Inc happened. If you were one of the early members, we would love to hear your stories of our beginnings.

We have a series of interesting **Book Reviews** - not all totally Botanic

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

PRESIDENTS REPORT	3
Dianne Smith- the founder of BASNZ	4
Workshop: Bees of NZ	5
Book Review	7
Members Question	8
The Brilliant Story of Colour: PAINT TUBES	11
BOOK REVIEWS - Fiction	13
The Flora of the Artic Circle	14
My Visit to William Cowley in the UK: Pt. 1	16
Internet	20
My Botanical Book List	21
BUY - SELL - EXCHANGE	22

or even Non-Fiction. **Suzy Abbott** mentioned *Miss Benson's Beetle*. I could not resist downloading and reading. The book is a fascinating and enjoyable read. *The Signature of All Things* is another good read - you learn quite a number of interesting facts in this fiction book.

Gillian Receveur gave an interesting talk at our last Zoom meeting on her favourite books. We asked her to list them for us. I, and probably most of you, have quite a few of these on my shelves. Time to dust them off and become reacquainted.

Lesley Alexander also gave us an interesting slide show on Vellum and has shared the highlights of it here. Lesley may also have found a NZ supplier whom she is checking out at the moment.

Then, we had a fantastic Zoom Bee Workshop with Shevaun Doherty - Jennifer Duval-Smith shares our experiences inside. Shevaun was incredibly generous with both her time and knowledge.

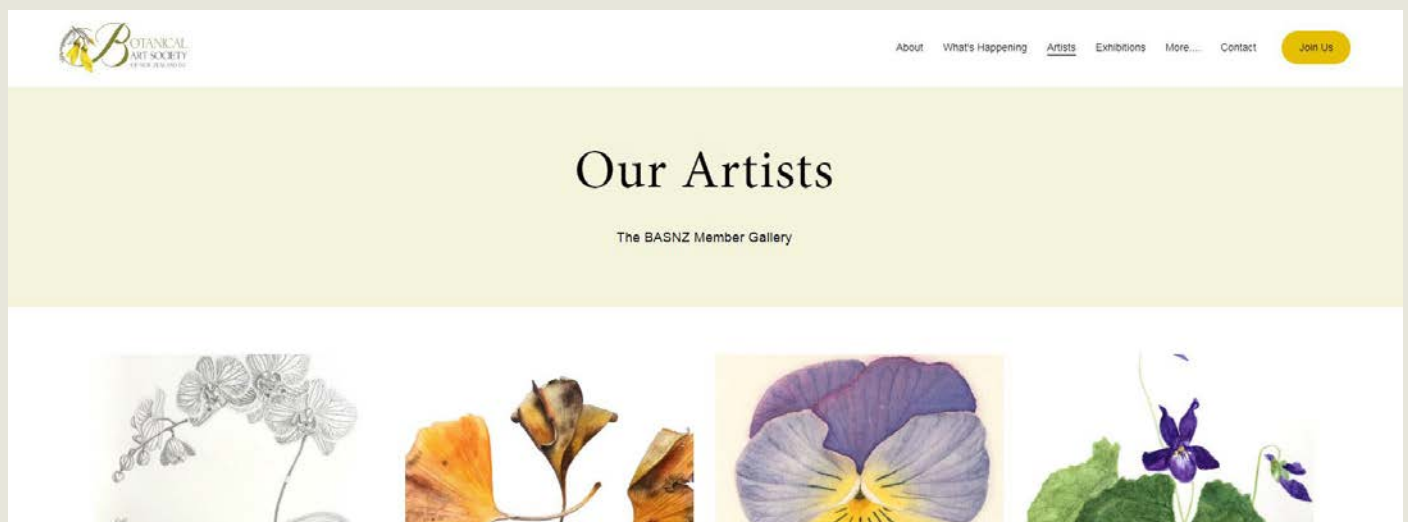
We have received some interesting **Tips from Our Members** as well, so I suggest you grab a cuppa, put your feet up and have a good read!

- Elizabeth



Beautiful bee artwork by member Juliana Child

Our new website!



Have you checked out our new website?? Launched just last week, the site has a growing number of resources for our members and those interested in botanical art worldwide. You'll also find some back-issues of our newsletter available online as well.

botanicalartnz.org

PRESIDENTS REPORT

Dear Members,

I really didn't expect to be writing yet another message to you while in Lockdown, but here we are again. I live in Auckland and as such am in Level 3 while the majority of you are in Level 2, let's hope we have all moved down levels by the time you are reading this.

Spring is certainly here now, we have lovely bright green new foliage springing up everywhere, Akeake and Clivia are flowering profusely on our driveway, and I've discovered bluebells on the drive for the first time – not sure how they got there as I certainly didn't plant them! As I pass them on my daily walk, they bring back very fond memories of walking in the 'Bluebell Wood', part of Charnwood Forest near my childhood home in England. Perhaps they've been there all the time but I haven't noticed as I zoom by in the car!

I would like to introduce two of our members Lisa Dickson and Emma Scheltema who have agreed to take on the job of Secretary and the newsletter respectively. These two talented and super-organised ladies have already made the society run smoother and taken the pressure off Elizabeth Yuill Proctor who always did an amazing job, but was wearing many hats for far too long.

Lock down does have some advantages as I am delighted to say that we now have a website - www.botanicalartnz.org. It's looking very smart and with help from Annemarie and Matt at Cusp Digital, we are well on the way to pressing the 'live' button and may already have pressed it by the time you read this!

A huge thank you to all of you who have helped, advised, proof read, hunted for old newsletters, checked links work, and encouraged. What a great team we have! You can all help too by letting us know if any links stop working, you notice typos etc or generally want to help out – we will be on the lookout for a dedicated webmaster at some point.

We have enough completed pages to go public, and will add more information as we go along. More newsletters and exhibitions will be added to those pages as and when we can. We will be advertising all our 'members only' workshops and General Meetings on the 'What's Happening' page which we hope will inspire more NZ botanical artists to join us.

Check out the contact page to find where your nearest Representative is – get in touch to find out what's happening in your area. If nothing is happening, suggest a meet-up or group chat! It's your society, let's all get it buzzing with exciting events!

Off on my walk again now,
Cheers,
Lesley



This issue we decided to have our founder, Dianne Smith featured along with some information on our roots as a Society, instead of a featured artist. Irene Blair has written this memoir of Dianne and the origins of our Society. The Society has gone through a few name changes as it grew, including Canterbury Botanical Art Society before it became The Botanical Art Society NZ Inc in 2006.

DIANE SMITH, the founder of BASNZ

The inspiration behind the Botanical Art Society of New Zealand and my introduction to botanical art.

I first met Dianne Smith in February 2003, Dianne had organised a three day flower painting workshop. The guest tutor was Elizabeth Sherras Clark* from England. Dianne had advertised this workshop in the N.Z Gardener. The workshop was held at the Avice Hill Centre. It was also followed by a talk (organised by the Friends of the Botanical Gardens) on Elizabeth's travels in South America and Central Africa to paint plants in situ. I was fascinated and inspired. This workshop was held at Avice Hill in the same room that today is used by the local BASNZ group. Elizabeth was an inspiring tutor and Dianne a great organiser. There were ten attendees at the workshop.

After this workshop Dianne encouraged us to form a botanical art group. This consisted of Rosemary Crick (Dunedin) Ann Mackersy (Dunedin) Serena McWilliams, myself and of course Dianne. Dianne also encouraged me to attend the Melbourne School of Botanical Art which Dianne herself had attended several times. I learnt of the strong Australian Botanical art scene and revival of botanical art around the world. In Melbourne I met so many

wonderfully talented people who had similar interests in plants and painting, very stimulating, all due to encouragement from Dianne.

Shortly after my trip to Melbourne Dianne formed a rudimentary botanical art group and Dianne organised a small exhibition at the Christchurch Botanic Gardens Information Centre in conjunction with the Friends of the Gardens. Exhibitors were, Dianne Smith, Anne Mackersy and myself.

Early the following year Dianne placed a notice in the paper inviting those interested in forming a botanical art group to attend a meeting at the Tea Kiosk in the Botanic Garden. Approximately 20-30 people responded. This was the first step in forming a botanical art group and was to be called the Canterbury Botanical Art Group until we had the required numbers to become national. I no longer have records of these meetings but know Dianne was President, I was Secretary/Treasurer and on the committee was Serena McWilliams and Helen Nutt and a couple of others. Many meetings were held at the Serena's studio in the Art Centre.

Diane organised exhibitions, meetings, workshops and regular classes with great enthusiasm. The classes were mainly held at Advice Hill with a few, for a while, at the Francis Sturrock Studio at the Art Centre. Parking was a problem so we reverted to Avice Hill, Memorial Ave. One of the first workshops was tutored by Susan Worthington* Dianne also organised the first exhibitions of the Canterbury group at Our City Otautahi.

- Irene Blair



Back row from left: Serena McWilliams, centre Ann Mackersy, Right Irene Blair; **Front row:** 2nd from left Dianne Smith, ?, ?, centre Elizabeth Sherras Clark, 2nd from right Rosemary Crick. Some of the names have sadly been forgotten - if you recognise anyone, please let us know.

BEES OF NEW ZEALAND

Observing, painting and appreciating - with Shevaun Doherty

“To develop a complete mind: Study the science of art; Study the art of science. Learn how to see. Realise that everything connects to everything else.”

- Leonardo da Vinci

Over the last fortnight, twelve BASNZ members seized the opportunity to take part in a two part online workshop led by the brilliant botanical artist, Bee Warrior and President of the SBA, Shevaun Doherty.

Shevaun is world renowned for her paintings of bees, including a suite of Irish stamps, and her work in supporting bee conservation efforts. She is a convincing advocate for the consideration and inclusion of pollinators by botanical artists as a way to reflect the interconnectedness of species in our environment and to reflect the cold reality that without insects there will be no flowers to paint. It is also perhaps worth reporting that in Shevaun’s experience, paintings which include pollinators actually sell faster. I’m sure it will be of interest to many that the judicious addition of a bee might be just what is needed to complete a painting which just feels slightly lacking.



Beautiful bee artwork by member Juliana Child



Beautiful bee in progress during the workshop (Jennifer Duval-Smith)

Shevaun’s passion for the topic is highly infectious and spurred a flurry of activity as we all began our own research and collecting and sharing our own images. As it turns out that bees of all kinds are not always as cooperative in posing as the artist might like, Shevaun gave us many tips about collecting and managing specimens, including how to adapt a dead specimen to ensure they look a little more lively on the page.

As a group we greatly appreciated the effort that Shevaun had put in to research the bees that we have here in New Zealand. This made for an extremely relevant and personalised workshop and a deeper learning experience which we could connect more readily with observations from our local environment. It was news (to me, at least) that we have 28 native bees in New Zealand, just one of which is indigenous. Most of our native bees are solitary bees i.e. they do not live in colonies. The European honey bee *Apis mellifera*

“Warmest thanks to everyone for a memorable workshop. It has been the highlight of Spring”

- Juliana Child



Beautiful bee artwork by member Juliana Child

was first introduced 180 years ago and we have four introduced species of bumblebee, at least one of which has since died out in Europe. Some of us also learned that mimicry in nature can be so convincing that often what we might perceive as a bee, may in fact be a fly (oops!). The zoom recordings and PDFs from the presentations are rich resources which I have already referred back to several times and will do so again.

Bee anatomy is quite complex and essential to master for a lifelike bee painting. Shevaun alerted us to key aspects we may not previously have observed on bumblebees, such as the 3 primitive eye or 'ocelli' on the top of the head, the bald patch on the back of the thorax, key aspects of wing venation, and the position of the antennae which is actually much lower on the head than you might initially expect. Sadly it appears 'The Bee Movie' is a travesty both to the anatomy and lifecycle of the honey bee. Spoiler alert: the women do most of the work.

I do love an in-person workshop, but the reality is that with Covid and our geographical isolation, these are going to be much more difficult than they may have been in the past. I think everyone was slightly surprised by how intimate and effective a Zoom

workshop can be. The demonstration view is closer than it would be in person, and Shevaun mentioned that she was able to do more hands-on painting. Although she was not able to do the individual 'walk around' we were able to share work, chat and ask questions freely. Certainly there was a lot of benefit in being able to watch a bee, or simply the eye of a bee take shape in front of our eyes in real time, although I imagine few of us are able to 'see' in as many colours as Shevaun does! Sadly we were not able to give her a hug at the end.

The overwhelming impression I am left with from the workshop is Shevaun's warmth and open generosity with her knowledge. I'd also like to thank her for her commitment, which included staying up very late over two consecutive Friday nights, going well over time (yay!) and fending off her enthusiastic kitten. I'd also like to thank Elizabeth Yuill Proctor and Lesley Alexander for the concept and the coordination, as the behind the scenes to-and-fro is always much greater than it appears. BASNZ substantially subsidised this course and I think we all found the value of being able to participate was enormous and will extend well beyond our group as we take up the 'bee warrior' manifesto. I hope that we are able to build on this model in future as it represents a very real benefit to our membership.

Just a note, If you are a BASNZ member and you have the chance to participate in future, I would recommend responding as quickly as possible. The places are limited to 12 and they fill really rapidly - we'd hate you to miss out!

- Jennifer Duval Smith

If you'd like to find out more, here are some useful links:

Shevaun Doherty's [website](#) which is well worth the look

Shevaun on [how to paint a honey bee](#)

[For the love of bees](#)

[Te Ara: New Zealand's wasps and bees](#)

[iNaturalist: Colletidae \(Plasterer Bees\)](#)

[Solitary Bee Ecology in NZ](#)

[Mistletoe magic and super bees](#)

Podcast: [Our Changing World- New Zealand's Smallest Bee](#)

[Maria Sibylla Merian](#)

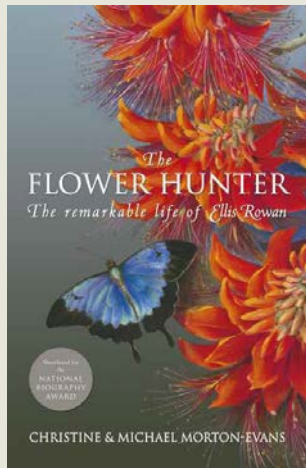
BOOK REVIEW

“The Flower Hunter” The Remarkable Life of Ellis Rowan

By, Christine & Michael Morton-Evans
ISBN: 9780731812851
Pub: 2008

The Flower Hunter is the incredible story of a woman who went to extraordinary lengths to paint her beloved subject matter, Australia’s wildflowers. She journeyed to some of the most wild and inhospitable areas of Australia in the late 1800’s.

She lived for a short time in New Zealand with her husband Captain Frederic Rowan at the Pukearuhe garrison in the King Country. When Ellis discovered that she was expecting she returned to Australia.



She was to revisit New Zealand where she met Margaret Stoddart and was generous in her praise of her botanical work. She also met the English botanical artist Marianne North. This meeting was to be a turning point in Ellis’s life, perhaps envy of North’s freedom to wander at will. Ellis decided on her own goal to paint a complete collection of Australia’s wildflowers. During World War 1 Ellis ventured alone into the tropical jungles of New Guinea in search of all 72 known species of the Bird of Paradise. Not only was she the first white woman to do so, she was 70 years old.

Ellis won many accolades for her paintings but male artists did not recognise her talents or were envious of her success and during her lifetime she was to cause controversy for the person she was, as for her work.

Today we would call her an intrepid traveller but her modes of transport were not of today’s standards. She certainly must have appeared a striking figure in her attire, “a pretty fairy like little woman, always over-dressed” ploughing through the rough terrain, brandishing her paintbrushes and parasol, her garments better suited to a ballroom than the bush. On her death in 1922 there was hardly a household in Australia that didn’t know her name. Today, her work lives on in the 970 paintings carefully preserved in the National Library of Australia. I found this a great read and I have great admiration for a woman who was able to follow her passion of botanical painting, but to some cost to her husband and only child. Certainly a remarkable life.

- Gillian Receveur



Ellis Rowan (1880s) ‘Diplanchea tetraphylla, Golden bouquet tree’, Queensland. Courtesy National Library of Australia.



L: Ellis Rowan (c. 1916–1917) ‘Barringtonia sp. with Larva’, Papua New Guinea; R: Ellis Rowan (1887) ‘Barringtonia racemosa’, Queensland. Courtesy National Library of Australia.

QUESTION TO THE MEMBERS

What is your favourite tip you'd share with other members?



For travel I use a \$5.00 collapsible travel mug from Kmart as a water container. It's light to pack, has a very stable bottom and sealable lid, while the rubber top means I can lie a brush down across the top without it rolling off.

- Suzi Pearce

Roll your brush handle (above the ferrule) between two fingers, so the wet hairs roll on to scrap paper and form a perfect point. This can soon become a habit.

- Pam Hollow

The one mistake I made until I didn't (took a while to sink in) was to leave the highlights alone and not be tempted to fiddle.

There's a big difference between the softer highlights you can lift out and those bright highlights you really want to have an impact. I never used to leave well enough alone and would end up filling in too much of the highlight by fiddling. I have a drawer full of paintings that I stashed away because they were flat and lacked any impact.

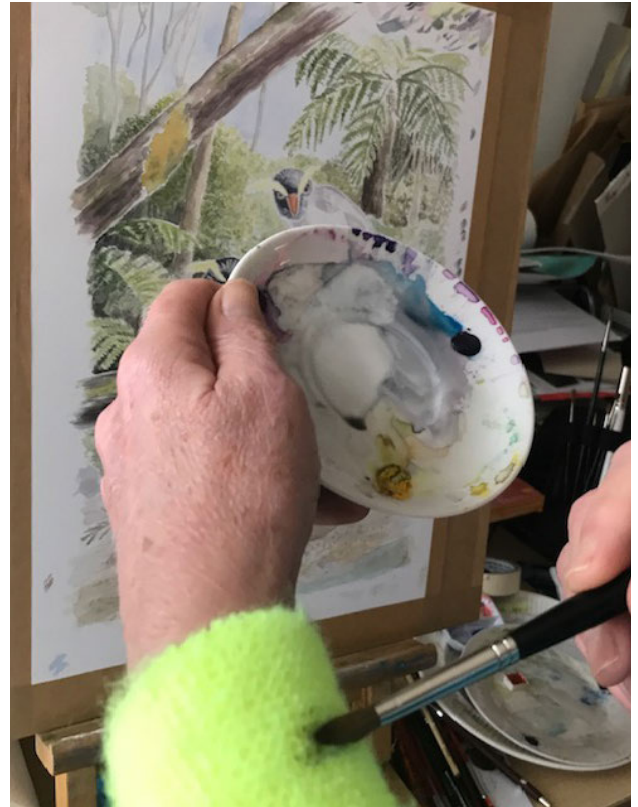
I finally worked it out so now just as I've learnt to take breaks and leave a finished painting alone, I take care to leave those main highlights alone.

- Suzi Pearce

My tip for watercolour artists would be to wear a wrist sweatband on your non-painting wrist - it's always there to dab your brush on!

I'm sure you've all got one you never use somewhere!

- Lesley Alexander



Never sure whether to go darker with your watercolour? One easy way to 'try' it out before you commit with another glaze or darker colour is to paint the area with clean water. We know that watercolour dries lighter so a water wash will look darker too while it is still wet. If that increase in tone gives you the result you want, you know it will work with a colour wash too.

- Lesley Alexander

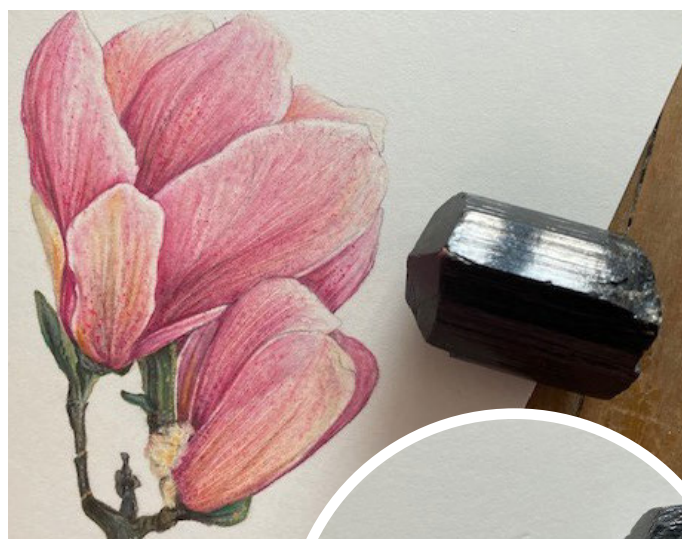
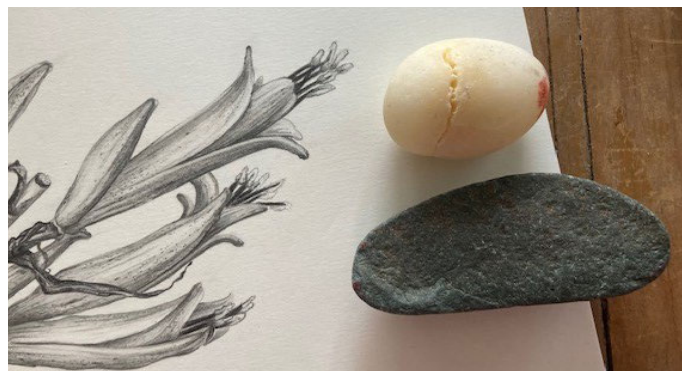
*I use stones, to roughen the paper or to smooth/ burnish the colours.
I have made some photos of the stones I use often for my watercolour and Colour pencil paintings.*

The white stone is very smooth and can blend colours nicely together especially for colour pencils and graphite. I also use it to burnish colour pencil paintings.

The grey one is a bit rougher. It roughens the paper and creates beautiful highlights in watercolour paintings like in my chilli pepper here.

The turmaline crystal is quite edgy and sharp, it is good for small highlights in watercolour paintings or structures in colour pencil paintings. Very good if you want to paint leaves for example. Hope it is visible on my magnolia painting?

- Jane Zimmerman



What is your favourite tip you'd share with other members?

1) for my older eyes I find a magnifying clip on for my glasses really helpful and easy for fine detail.
2) I adapted a small box as a travelling easel and to carry paper, brushes, paint etc. (As you will see, I am having a go at painting fish for a change!!)
- Jo Ewing



The drawing board so that I am sitting in a more upright position.
The daylight lamp which is absolutely essential and allows you to paint into the winter evenings.
Very fine sandpaper which I prefer to use to remove small marks as opposed to a magic sponge which can sometimes raise the surface of the paper.
A crepe rubber which I use to remove excess graphite after drawing/ tracing.
My yoga block! Great as a stand for subject matter and I can also pin leaves/branches etc into it.
A viewfinder which I find very helpful for isolating colours and in particular tones.
Also my faithful soft cloth.

I couldn't seem to find the viewfinder online at either Gordon Harris or The Drawing Room (our art supply shops here in Ch-Ch) but I am sure they would be able to help if one called.
It is really designed for Landscape painters to frame a view but I find it so useful to isolate a colour. [This is mine for sale at Amazon.](#)

I bought the crepe eraser from [Conservation Supplies](#) who have so many interesting goodies to check out. I see that they have sold out at the moment however [the Drawing Room](#) sells them. The crepe eraser tends to be used by framers I believe to remove adhesive/sticky tape residue but I really like them for lifting off graphite on a pencil drawing. Vincent Jeanerot put us on to them but Shevaun uses a rolled up piece of kneadable eraser which was a great idea too.
- Suzy Abbott

The Brilliant Story of Colour - PAINT TUBES

This edition, we are taking a quick break from our vibrant colours to look at our paint tubes. Imagine a time when paint (oils, acrylics, watercolours) didn't come in tubes....

We all know how frustrating it can be to have to set up (or clean up) equipment, when all we really want to do is paint. Well, that frustration is the driver for how the paint tube came about.

It all started because a little-known American portrait painter John Goffe Rand was frustrated. Accessing a bit of paint was more time consuming than taking off a lid and squeezing a tube. Paint was stored in little squares of pigs' bladder, tied up with string. This was the best way to store oil paint to prevent it drying out. When artists wanted to use the paint, they would pierce the bladder with a tack, squeeze the paint out the hole, and then mend the bladder with something that resembled a puncture repair kit. The holes were never completely sealed, and the bladders didn't travel well, often bursting open. Frustrated with spending so much of his time repairing little punctures and cleaning up paint, Rand invented a collapsible tube made of tin and sealed with a screw cap. Rand's tube gave paint a long shelf life, didn't leak and could be repeatedly opened and closed! His invention was patented in 1841 but was surprisingly slow to be accepted by many French artists. The tube added considerably to the price of the paint, but eventually practicality won out over price.



Paint tube – Sargent's paint tubes (labelled by hand) Harvard Art Museum

The tube not only increased portability but encouraged the creation of new colours. Up until this point, paint pigments had remained relatively unchanged since the Renaissance. Paints were time consuming to produce and quick to dry out, even when stored in the pigs' bladders. Artists tended to prepare only a few colours to work with during a painting session, to avoid waste. Rand's tin tubes allowed artists to take full advantage of the new pigments being invented, mainly by the industrial chemists of the 19th century. Small amounts of paint could be easily added to palettes, with no interruption to the painting process. Rand's tubes were particularly instrumental to the Impressionist movement. Artists could transport the paints easily into the outdoor environment where they worked to capture natural light. They revelled in being able to take full advantage of the bright new pigments, such as chrome yellow, manganese violet and emerald green. And rather than concentrating on a single colour and one area of the canvas, they could paint as Pissarro advised - "paint everything at once by placing tones everywhere".



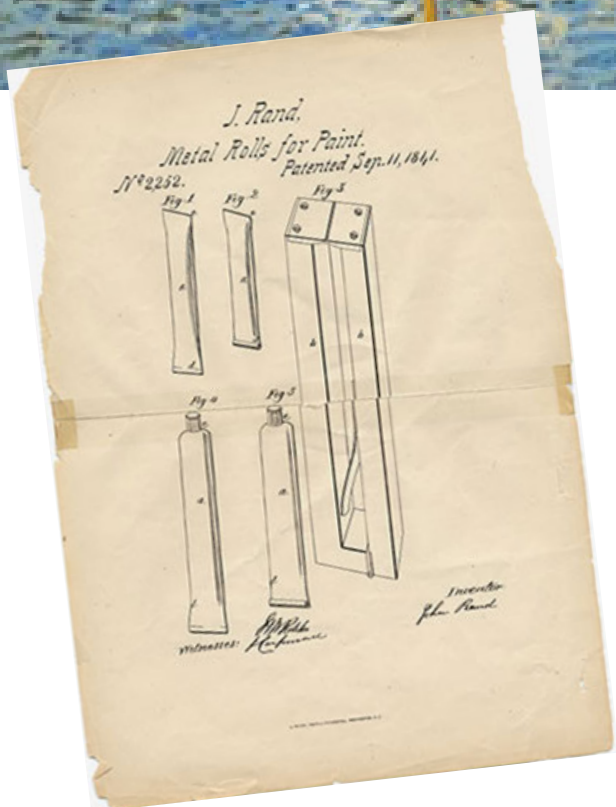
Pigs bladders – Bladders of paint found at Gainsborough's former house

The Brilliant Story of Colour - cont:



CAPTION

Monet – The Bridge at Argenteuill 1874



Rand's patent – Smithsonian

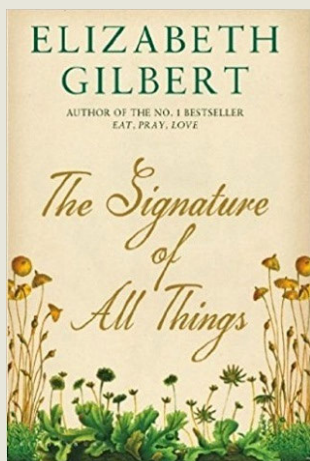
Paint tubes are something that we probably take for granted. But for the Impressionists, they were instrumental in helping them hone their craft, with their en plein air practice dependent on the tube packaged paint. Renoir went so far as to state that “without colours in tubes, there would be no Cézanne, no Monet, no Pissarro, and no Impressionism.” Never underestimate the power of the paint tube!

- Lisa Dickson

BOOK REVIEWS - Fiction

The Signature of All Things

Author of both “Eat, Pray, Love” and “Big Magic” (which I loved), “The Signature of All Things” is Gilbert’s 6th book. The novel tells the story of Alma Whittaker, born in Philadelphia in 1800. Her father, who came from humble origins in London is a self-made titan having made his fortune dealing in exotic plants. Alma, though not blessed with great beauty, is the apple of her father’s eye and with her keen mind develops a fascination for botany and the natural world.



However as time passes she longs for love and with little success, she throws herself into the study of mosses. This is until the arrival of Ambrose Pike, a gifted lithographer of orchids who comes to stay at the Whittaker estate. She falls in love and marries but all is not what it seems. On the death of her father, Alma sets off an extraordinary journey to discover the flora and fauna of Tahiti.

The book is a wonderful window into a changing world of botanical and geographical discovery at the end of the 19th Century but in particular makes one reflect on all the unsung women of science who achieved greatness against all odds and whose accomplishments were often overshadowed by those of their male counterparts.

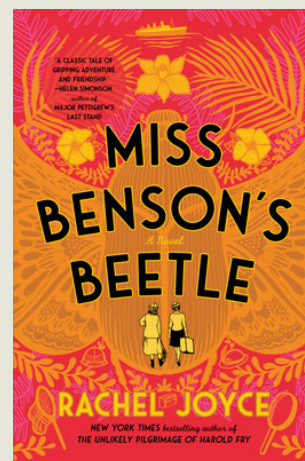
Another great read.

- Suzy Abbott

Miss Benson's Beetle

by Rachel Joyce

I thoroughly enjoyed this very entertaining and engaging read by Rachel Joyce, also the author of the debut novel “The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry”. Mrs Benson’s Beetle is the story of two women, who on a search for an undiscovered species of golden beetle in New Caledonia, become unlikely friends in what ultimately becomes a journey of self-discovery.



1950’s post war London and forty year old Marjory Benson is a disillusioned domestic science teacher who after one final humiliation at school walks out and sets out on her long held dream to find a golden beetle, accompanied by her unlikely sidekick Enid Pretty. Both Marjory and Enid have suffered enormous loss and pain as a consequence of the war and as the story unfolds, it is not only their friendship but also their bravery which deepens. Crossing the world they encounter one challenge after another, yet surmount each one with gusto and loyalty to each other and their goal.

This touching yet joyful and humorous novel gives a real insight into the lasting effects of war but also shows the transformative power of friendship.

Highly recommended.

-Suzy Abbott

Another botanical newsletter to read...

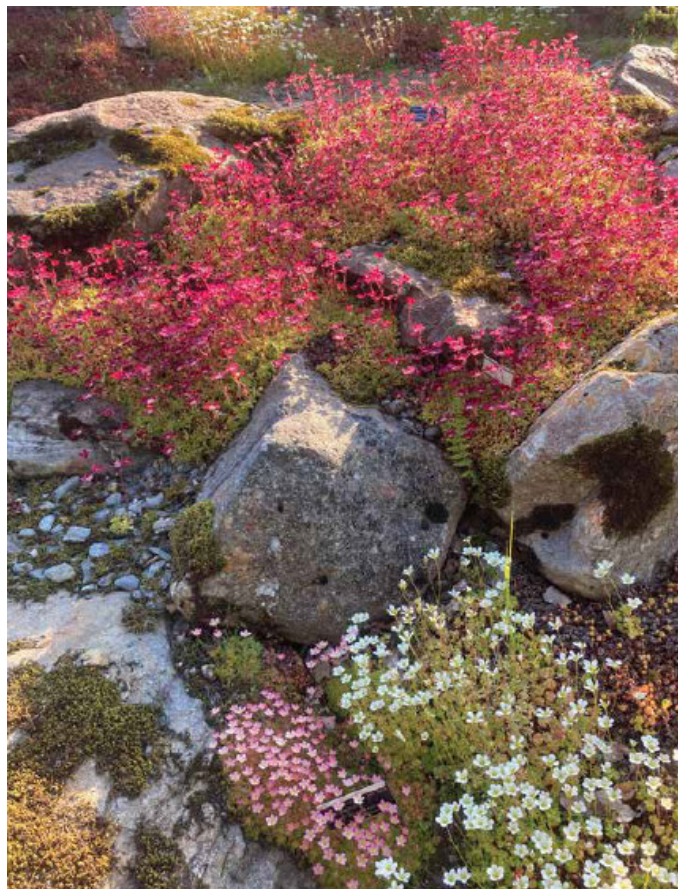
Have you seen Shirley Sherwood’s botanical art newsletter? Its worth a read if you haven’t checked it out. You can [subscribe here](#). Her website shirleysherwood.com is also well worth exploring for botanical inspiration!

THE SHIRLEY
SHERWOOD
COLLECTION

The Flora of the Arctic Circle

Two years ago I moved from Auckland, New Zealand, all the way up to Tromsø in the far North of Norway, 300km deep inside the Arctic Circle. I did not expect that so many plants and flowers would grow here and was amazed by how diverse and clever the flora is up here.

But even so, everything is a bit different up here in the Arctic Circle. During the polar night season, which runs from mid-November to mid-January, we have a maximum of 4-5 hours of daylight and the sun never quite makes it over the horizon during this time. Then, from February onward, the days get lighter fairly quickly and the nights get shorter and shorter. Already from mid-April and all the way through to mid-August we get to enjoy 24hrs of daylight, and from about mid-May to the end of July, the sun never sets during the night so you could actually even suntan in the middle of the night if you wanted to. From mid-August, darkness comes back, first very slowly and then from mid-September to the end of October, you pretty much get a normal duration day with daylight from 6am to about 8pm.



Alpine saxifrage

So with these kind of seasonal conditions, it's not surprising that the warmest months are from June to August with an average temperature of around 20 degrees, while it can go down to -8 degrees in winter on the coast, and much lower than that further inland.

The flora up here has found some truly incredible ways to adapt to these conditions.

From the end of May onward, when the snow has melted, everything starts to bloom and turn green pretty quickly. Many of the flowers have a purple colour, and here and there, you'll also find some yellow, white and orange ones blooming. The plants are prepared to grow quickly so that they can spread their seeds and get pollinated with the help of bumblebees and butterflies over the summer. The 24h sunlight during this time gives them an extra boost of energy to do this.



Arctic cottongrass

In the permafrost regions, there is a year-round frozen soil layer and only the thin top layer of soil thaws and freezes again every year. This makes it necessary for the plants to have a shallow root system. Larger plants such as trees whose roots go deep into the ground cannot grow in the Arctic. Most plants of the arctic plants are also 'perennials', they do not die off during the winter season and have the ability to return from their rootstock in spring.

The flowers that grow in this region also frequently have interesting cup-shaped heads and often dark colours like purple or blue, all of which are clever tricks that help them absorb more sunlight. Many plants have also developed woolly buds and seeds for additional wind protection.



Snake's head fritillary (*Fritillaria meleagris*), left, and Himalayan Blue Poppy (*Meconopsis betonicifolia*), right.

Many gentian flowers have adapted and bloom in wonderful purple colours over the wintertime. In summer you can find Himalayan poppies, peonies, saxifrages, rhododendrons and many many meadow flowers.

Norway is also known for an abundant diversity of berries. August is the best time to pick Blueberries and Lingonberries. These berries are also an important food source for reindeers, moose and many species of birds that live here in the wild.

The mountain vegetation, on the other hand, is characterised by small plants and flowers that grow very close to each other to keep warm from the cold and strong winds. You can usually find them at a height starting from 700ft upwards.



Arctic blue butterfly and Arctic bumblebee (inset)

Because of the snow that thaws from the mountains around May and then flows down into the valleys, there are a lot of wetlands over the summer and into autumn. Here, you can find a lot of interesting and beautiful fauna too, such as arctic cottongrass and wetland mini orchids.

There is so much more to discover and learn about the adaption of the plants up here. But so far this is what I have learned and can share. I hope you will find it as interesting as I have and would love to welcome you here some day to get out and explore together.

- Jane Zimmerman



Arctic gentian (*Gentiana algida*)

My Visit to William Cowley in the UK - PART ONE

Visiting 'William Cowley', traditional vellum makers to buy some vellum

In September 2018 I was lucky enough to visit William Cowley, the only vellum and parchment maker in the UK and the last traditional vellum maker in the world! However my journey with vellum really started a few years ago when the debacle with the Fabriano paper mill turning out poor quality hot press paper came to a head and botanical artists were on the hunt for different papers and surfaces to paint on. I had always admired beautiful calligraphy work on vellum, and was delighted to see that botanical artists were using it too.

I got my first chance to try painting on vellum, like many of you did, when Dianne Sutherland, a UK botanical artist came to run some workshops. On the last night of her visit to Auckland, 3 of us were lucky enough to be treated to an evening of painting on vellum! Prior to Dianne's visit, I decided to order some vellum from Cowleys and ended up having a long chat with Paul Wright, the manager. I mentioned knowing Dianne, and immediately he offered me a tour of the premises if I ever went over to the UK. I'm sure he offered that thinking I would never go - but he was wrong. Once I realised how expensive it is to ship anywhere, even within the UK, due to high insurance costs, I knew that if I ever wanted any more, I would have to go myself and pick it up.

So back in 2018, with my brother and son in tow, we drove to Newport Pagnell, a small, sleepy market town in Buckinghamshire. Google maps did us proud until we got there - 'your destination is on the right' it said but we only saw a farm track, no buildings in sight! We drove on a little further into the village to ask one of the locals. No one had heard of them, although eventually one lady did think there was a 'paper maker' down the lane! We had eventually arrived at the place where the last 4 people actively make vellum by traditional methods - Paul, the manager, Lee and Steve - the two master craftsmen and Andrew, the new apprentice.

Paul told us afterwards that keeping quiet about what they were doing was to prevent the animal rights brigade descending on them. No animals are killed purely for their skin, but Paul wasn't sure that the animal rights would see it like that!



Brad, Paul and I outside William Cowley

Vellum of course is treated as an animal skin and is a by-product of the meat industry. Generally artists use calf skin, but sheep and goats can be used too although for different purposes. Goat is often used

for drum skins and sheep is preferred by calligraphers as it can be prepared so it can be written on both sides. The word 'vellum' has the same origin as veal or 'veau' in French meaning calf so treated calf skin is 'vellum' whereas sheep and goat skins are referred to as 'parchment'. It should be noted that in the US the word 'vellum' refers to tracing paper and all skins are called parchment!

Vellum has been used as a writing surface since before the Middle Ages. The Magna Carta in 1215, the Domesday Book, completed in 1086 by order of King William the Conqueror and thousands of other historical documents have been written on vellum. Traditionally the monks used vellum when transcribing the bible - they actually used aborted animal fetuses as they were the 'purest' they could get. Albrecht Durer and Pierre-Joseph Redouté worked on vellum, as many others did - vellum is far more resilient than paper to water, fire, repeated handling and does not rot, ensuring its survival over hundreds of years. It's also known for its ability to make colours, especially transparent watercolour glow despite its off-white surface.

In 1870, when William Cowley started his workshop, there were 16 vellum makers in Newport Pagnell alone! Every legal document at the time was written on vellum as it was decreed that anything written such as house deeds had to last as long as the article it referred to. If the house was going to last 300 years, the deeds had to too! Vellum, unlike paper lasts for hundreds, even thousands of years.

When Prince William asked the Queen for permission to marry Kate Middleton, her Majesty signed the 'Instrument of consent' on a piece of William Cowley vellum – not sure if Harry had to get the same consent to marry Megan!



The hairs come off easily

The next stage is stretching the skins onto a frame called a 'herse', kept taut with wooden pegs where the fat and gunk is removed, a process known as 'scudding'. The new apprentice, Andrew had that 'lovely' job – the smell alone would have put the hardest of people off, but knowing that Andrew was also a vegetarian, he certainly gained my utmost respect!

The frames are then left to dry out in a big drying room. Once the skin is dry, the master craftsman uses a traditional crescent-shaped knife called a 'lunellum'. The word comes from the Latin luna (moon) because of its shape which prevents accidentally cutting the vellum. It is used to scrape thin layers from the stretched skin before sending it back to Andrew to soak it again.



Half moon knife (lunellum) for scraping vellum



The large stone baths where the skins are left to soak

So once inside the 200-year-old barn, Paul takes us through the whole process of making vellum. Paul handpicks each skin, sometimes looking at up to 500 skins to only find a dozen that would be suitable for vellum. We were shown the original concrete baths where the skins are soaked in lime and water for up to 4 weeks to remove the hairs. Paul took one out to demonstrate how easily the hairs come out after a soak! He explained that you can tell how old and what time of year the animals died – the ones with white skin were killed in winter, the ones with a honey-coloured tan - the summer! The size of the hair follicles gives an idea of age – the bigger follicles, the older the animal.

To get the vellum thin enough, this process of wetting, drying, scraping is done 14 times and the end result is a semi-transparent skin, smooth on one side with a suede-like feel to the underside. The skilled craftsmen can decide to leave the veining in or take it all out, create different thicknesses and different degrees of transparency depending on its final use.

We all had a go using the lunellum – it was much heavier than I expected but once you got a rhythm going it was easy to keep going! Not sure I'd manage all day every day though! Paul told each of us as we had a go that we were the only person on the planet at that particular time using a lunellum! Amazing!



Afterwards we went over to the cottage to look at a selection of vellum I had to choose from! Up the winding, creaking staircase – even I had to duck at one point – to a room full of wooden shelves of rolled up vellum. It was like being in a store in Diagon Alley (Harry Potter) – the low ceilings, uneven creaky floors, exposed beams and tiny latticed windows created a real sense of the history of the place. I was expecting to see Dobby, the house elf come to see if he could be of assistance!

“the low ceilings, uneven creaky floors, exposed beams and tiny latticed windows created a real sense of the history of the place...”

Despite vellum being one of the oldest surfaces available to artists, it continues to inspire many contemporary artists and art forms today. From the film industry (Harry Potter, LOTR, The Hobbit), interior decoration (one house in Chelsea, a wealthy London borough, ordered enough navy blue goat skins to 'wallpaper' the walls of the top floor of their mansion), to pirate maps for a pirate party held for an actor's son (yes, you can even put it through a printer) Cowley vellum is found all over the place! Many artists such as Damien Hirst, not just botanical artists are using vellum now as a way to beat art forgers! Each piece of vellum has its own DNA so forgeries can easily be detected – as long as a piece of the original artwork vellum has been saved to compare it with! Many of the rolls we saw were kept aside for particular artists who give Paul a call asking for their next piece to be sent out.

I ended up buying 2 whole skins of natural vellum as well as some pre-cut pieces to try out. You may have heard of Kelmscott vellum – this is made from a secret recipe whereby the scrapings of vellum that end up on the floor are turned into a paste-like substance which coats the vellum. Once dry, the vellum is rigid, incredibly smooth, white with no signs of any blemishes. It's supposed to be easier to paint on, but I haven't found it to be easier.



The shelves of rolls of vellum upstairs

Initially I expected a quick walk through the 'factory' before choosing which vellum to buy but Paul was such a brilliant 'tour guide', we were there for about 4 hours! He was so enthusiastic and a great ambassador for vellum giving what was surely a dying art, a chance of survival. Yes, vellum is made by other producers around the world, but knowing the vellum I paint on is made with traditional tools, by traditional methods makes each piece that much more special.

Here is a very good video showing how vellum – or parchment as it is called in the US – is made at the only US parchment maker 'Pergamena' in Montgomery, New York:

[How Animal Hides Are Made Into Parchment At The Last Workshop In The US](#)

- Lesley Alexander



The vellum pieces I bought from William Cowley.

INTERNET

Following on from our fantastic Bee Workshop with Shevaun Doherty - here is her lovely website, and yes there are images of Bees!

shevaundoherty.com

As this issue's query was for members tips - I have found some online which you may find useful:

These are a series of tips by various artists on the Artists and Illustrators site: <https://www.artistsandillustrators.co.uk/how-to/drawing/210/20-tips-for-painting-better-botanicals>

Krzysztof Kowalski is another very generous artist. He is also an online tutor. He used to paint very typical Botanical Art pieces but seems to have moved away from that. But [this link](#) takes you to his 12 go to colours. Not the usual list of colours, but if you scroll down there are swatches of every combination of his colours as well! Very useful and time saving. Plus descriptions of his colour choices, transparency rating, lightfastness, whether they are granulating or staining. He tends to use predominantly Winsor & Newton but also gives the equivalents in other brands.

I am aware that colour onscreen does not always translate to your palette or to a printer. I have downloaded [Krzysztof's pdf](#) into my iPad.

This next site is probably known to most of you. It belongs to Katherine Tyrrell. This link takes you to a page for Tips and Techniques links and goodness there are a lot of them!

<https://www.botanicalartandartists.com/tips-and-techniques.html>

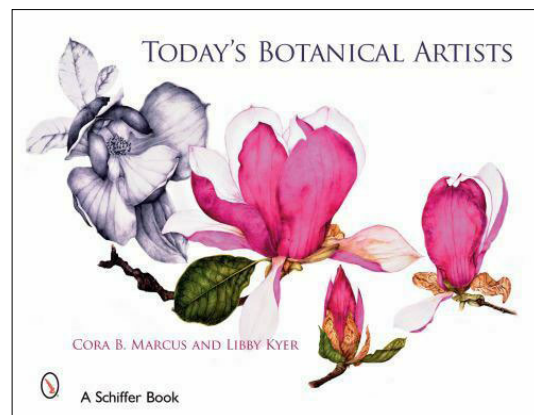
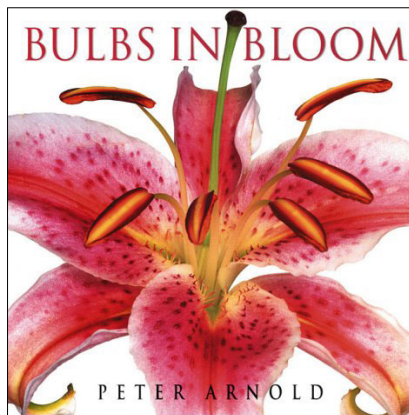
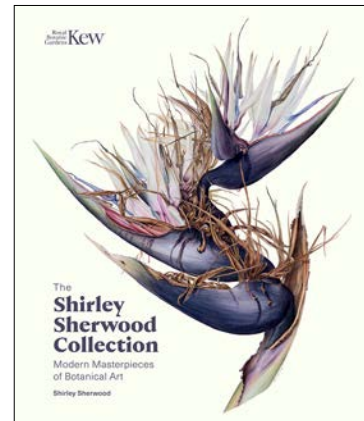
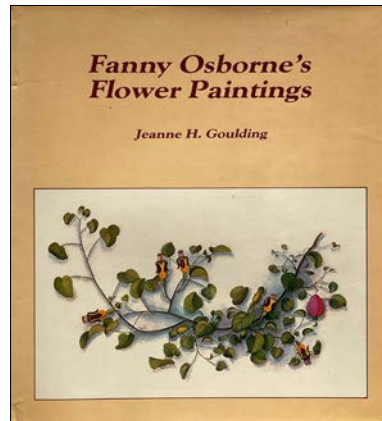
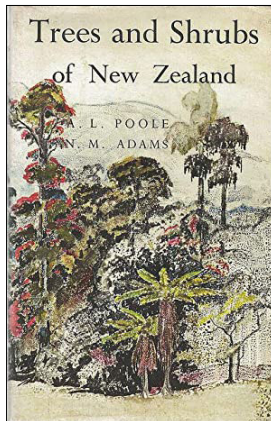
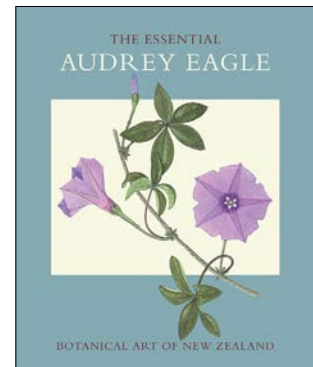
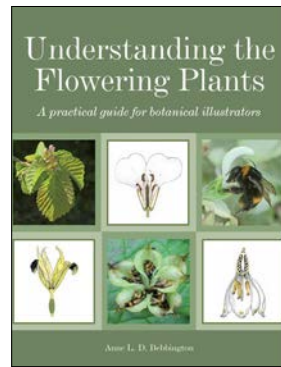
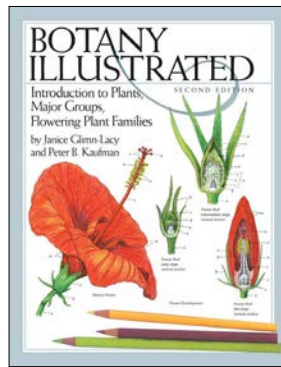
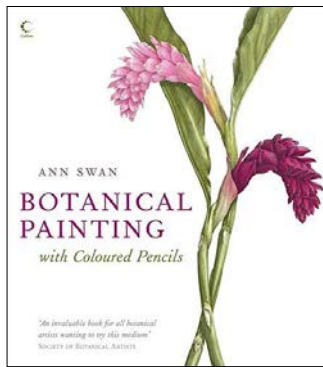
“Observation and the three Ps’ Patience, Practice and Perseverance, should be your guiding principles.”

- Margaret Stevens FSBA author of the *Art of Botanical Painting*
<https://www.botanicalartandartists.com/>

Right - Section from: Ellis Rowan (1887) 'Bauhinia monandra', Queensland. Courtesy National Library of Australia.



My Botanical Book List - Gillian Receveur



Technique –

Botanical painting with Coloured pencils by Ann Swan

Understanding Botany –

Botany Illustrated by Gilm-lacy and Peter Kaufman
Understanding the Flowering Plant by Anne Bebbington

Reference Accuracy of plants –

Botanical Art of NZ by Audrey Eagle
Trees and Shrubs of NZ by A. Poole & N. Adams (an older book but a good one. 1st edition 1963 but later reprints)

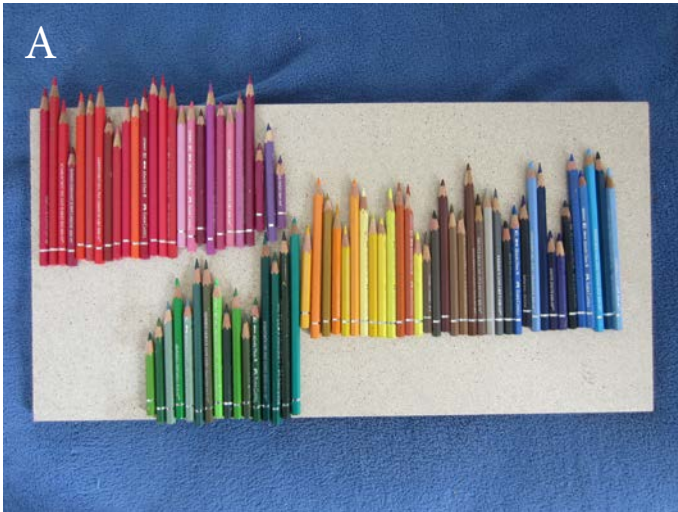
Composition –

Fanny Osborne's Flower paintings by Jeanne H. Goulding

Composition and Inspiration –

Shirley Sherwood Collection
RHS Gold Medal Winners by Charlotte Brooks
Today's Botanical Artists by Marcus & Kyer
Bulbs in Bloom by Peter Arnold

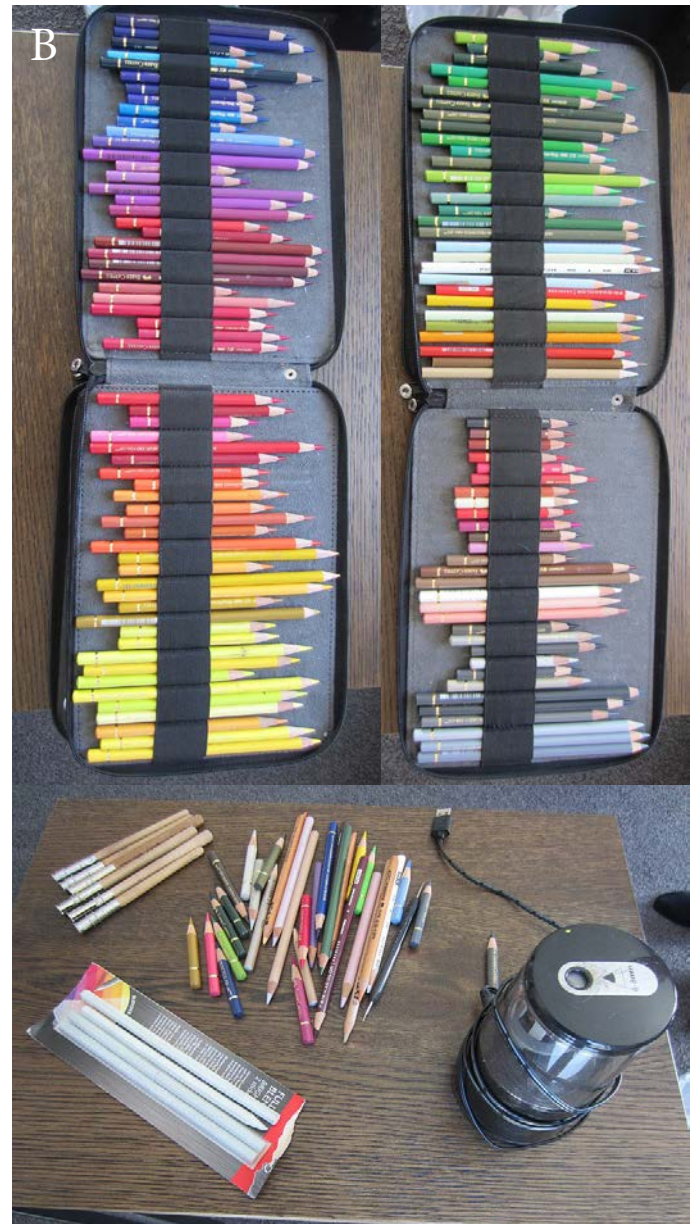
BUY - SELL - EXCHANGE



A. 77 Faber Castell Watercolour Pencil.
\$60 including postage

B. Leather Case holding 132 Faber Castell Polychromos Colour Pencils. Also 12 Prismacolor all in a case for 144 pencils, 6 Extension Holders, 4 Caran D'Ache Blending Sticks + Lyra Splendor Blending Pencil 1 & 1/2, Electric Pencil Sharpener. Bag of mixed pencils some are half.
Sold all together @ \$200.00 or \$220 with postage

If interested in either of these items please contact
Tina Grey - tina00g@gmail.com



Get in touch!

General enquiries

basnzinc@gmail.com

Membership

membership.basnzinc@gmail.com

Newsletter

newsletter.basnzinc@gmail.com

President

president.basnzinc@gmail.com

Quarterly newsletter of the Botanical Art Society of New Zealand

botanicalartnz.org