



The Botanical Art Society of New Zealand Inc

PO Box 29568, Fendalton, Christchurch 8540

Spring 2013 Newsletter

Summer, Xmas and Holiday Season

This headline may just give us all a little nudge to achieve much of the year's to-do list that hasn't quite been achieved!

October and November for me has been spent with family overseas and the first flush of home garden delights are yet to be savoured.

I hope everyone has made progress with their Botanical Art - unlike me!

However, I have had glorious success with my Pierre de Ronsard (the Eden Rose) pictured below.

Wishing everyone seasonal greetings!

Jenny

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Florilegium Delayed till 2014

As discussed at the BASNZ Committee Meeting at The Lodge on the 6th of November, the Florilegium exhibition has been delayed until the first quarter 2014 due to delays in completion of the new Botanical Garden building.

Helen advised that almost all artists have returned signed documentation regarding protection of their florilegium works during the exhibition. However, further time is available due to the delay in exhibition, which may be good news for some of you.

Suggested Yearly Programme 2014

At the same committee meeting, Helen suggested a set programme for each month of the year and this idea was well received. Below is the proposed programme for your perusal. We welcome your feedback.

February: Leaves

March: Pear

April: Quince Easter: 18-21

AGM: 30 April

May: Tamarillo

June: Painting stems in detail

July: Mushrooms

August: Have a break!

September: Camelia leaves/flowers

October: Tulips

November: Arum Lilies

Workshops in 2014

Jenny Coker Workshop // May

I am delighted to have been invited to conduct a 3-day workshop in May next year. A minimum of 13 attendees for us to confirm this workshop. Details are as follows and please do register your interest with Helen.

Dates: Saturday 3rd - Monday 5th of May

Times: 9.30 am - 4pm daily

Venue: Edna Hanafin Room, Cracroft Guide Centre, Cashmere

Cost: \$150



I have so enjoyed experimenting and developing my knowledge over the years, and I love sharing what I have learnt with my fellow artists and bringing whatever skills I possess to our watercolour table!

Subject matter has not been confirmed in my mind, but I am tending towards autumn leaves or tamarillos in keeping with the proposed focus for May.

Workshops by other artists are being considered and more details will follow as arrangements are made.

Beverly Allen Workshop

November 11-14, 2013 Report by Karen Atherton

Fourteen of our members were extremely privileged to have the world-class botanical watercolour artist Beverly Allen conduct a four-day workshop in November. As a newcomer to watercolour, I expected to be left in the dust technically for most of the time but the long course length gave me

time to absorb and practice new techniques. That, along with the generous individual instruction allowed me to take home a huge amount of new information.

Beverly took up botanical art in 1997 after a career as an illustrator and graphic designer. She has exhibited in her home city of Sydney, as well as in Melbourne, New York, Washington, Chicago, Amsterdam, Tokyo, Kyoto and London. Her paintings are held in the collections of the Botanic Gardens Trust, Sydney, the Shirley Sherwood Collection, the Highgrove Florilegium for the Prince of Wales' Charitable Trust, the Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation and the Isaac and Alisa Sutton Collection.



Her paintings are usually life-sized and she closely observes all parts of the plant, and often dissects them to reveal every detail. Then, working in watercolour on Arches paper, she layers and blends colours to capture the play of light and shade that gives form. Our workshop used red onions as subjects and focused on Beverly's techniques of tonal drawing, colour mixing and paint application to yield a three dimensional effect on paper.

We met in the light and airy Edna Hanafin Room of the Girl Guide Centre in Cashmere. We were asked to bring lamps with daylight bulbs and to set up individual white stages to Beverly's specifications for our subjects. A single strong light set at 45 degrees to the subject is very important to find the highlights while reflected light and shadows are needed to illuminate a subject realistically. The daylight bulb shows the colours as they look outdoors. Beverly encouraged us to control our light. We learned to use a grey card under our subjects to cut some of the reflected light if it was too strong and to move the lights up if necessary to find highlights.



Beverly spent most of the first day helping us to refine tonal pencil drawings and making sure that we could appreciate each light change on our subjects. She coached us in correct use of the measuring dividers and then used tracing paper to show us where our drawings needed darkening or lightening. (I found the Mars pencils she recommended much better than Derwent – more finely ground graphite so smoother, denser marks.) She spent time with each of us correcting our work and encouraging us to make detailed tonal drawings that would be our road maps for the watercolour painting stage. She gave us an exercise to do to practice our tonal drawing at home: place a strong line drawing of small round fruit underneath a piece of tracing paper and draw the picture on the tracing paper itself using only the tones.

The next day most of us were ready to trace our drawings on to good Arches paper and to begin to paint. Beverly spent some time showing us how to mix colours, mostly using a six-colour palette of warm and cool primary colours with a few supplementary colours added as needed. We were all interested in her amazing set of colour mix charts and plan to create our own charts as a group using Beverly's template. She told us to keep a soft rag in our hand to wipe our brush and to always have a piece of paper handy to test colours. Beverly turns her paper around a lot to make sure she is painting "downhill". She suggests taping watercolour paper on foam core to facilitate moving it around.

As a beginner, I was surprised at how bold she was with her initial washes. Her application of great splashes of Permanent Rose and a mix of French Ultramarine Blue and PR as first washes on the onion bulbs was fascinating to watch. She painted the form from the very beginning rather than laying down soft washes first and then adding layers of form later. The green stems started with a very definite yellow wash. The mixed green colour was added over that, again working to define the form at the very beginning.



While we worked on our paintings Beverly came around to each of us giving individual instruction and encouragement. She told us to look at our drawings but to observe the live subjects as well while painting. By the third day we were deeply into our work and using the dry brush techniques to add detailed form and character.

Beverly also discussed the use of shadows in botanical art and disagreed with the convention that shadows should never be used. She believes that shadows can be helpful when painting a group or collection of objects and when the object is obviously sitting on a surface rather than suspended in space.

Most of our onions had roots so Beverly taught us how to paint them by using masking on the front layer of roots and painting background roots over it, varying the root tones and softening the details in the background. We used masking fluid to mark out sections of our pictures that had changes of

texture or light. I used a ruling pen but Beverly used a regular calligraphy pen with a “postman’s nib” and a nib holder. Someone brought a blue coloured masking fluid called Pebeo (I think it was a French brand) that was thinner than the Winsor fluid most of us used. Beverly liked it and thought she might buy it next time.

Someone asked Beverly to do a leaf painting demonstration if she had time so Beverly took part of the last day to show several ways of approaching leaves. No tricks here – just keen observation and attention to detail. On the last day Beverly gathered up our finished paintings and displayed them so she could comment on each of our individual challenges and achievements with the group.

Having the workshop last four days was wonderful. We had time to ask questions, request demonstrations and get clarifications of technique. Beverly is an excellent teacher; patient, with a gift for clear, thorough explanation. She was organized and very easy to talk to throughout the workshop.

Many thanks to Helen Nutt for organising the workshop and to Jo Ogier for hosting Beverly and looking after her during her visit. We are all eager to have Beverly come back next year for another workshop.



Hints, Tips and Tricks:

Lifting: During the workshop Beverly shared hints and tricks that she has developed over time. She showed us several lifting methods. One was to cut a mask in a piece of Scotch Magic tape and then use a scalpel to expose the small area to be lifted before using a Chux brand gentle scrubbing pad to lift the paint. After lifting, she showed us how to use a fingernail to burnish the paper back into place. She also showed us how to lift colour and do colour softening with a stiff little flat brush.

Light boxes: Beverly told us several methods of creating light boxes to transfer outlines of tonal drawings on to good paper. A glass coffee table with a light underneath, an old medical X-ray viewing box, and a drawer with a lamp inside and a piece of glass over the top were ideas for DIY light box projects.

Neutral grey tint: Beverly gave us a recipe for neutral (grey) tint using cadmium red, cadmium yellow and French ultramarine blue.

Stretching a painting: She also demonstrated how to stretch a buckled painting. She placed it upside down over some blotting paper and sprayed it with plain water until it was damp. This method (rather than the usual soaking) preserves the size on the surface of the paper. She blotted any excess dampness from the paper with a soft towel and cut gummed paper tape to fit each side. She stuck the watercolour paper on a window with the image facing her and then gum taped it to the window. She said that it would dry flat in a few hours depending on the weather and then could be removed from the window with a scalpel. The short time in the sun should not harm the colours.

Beverly also recommended a few links for us:

Florilegium Bookstore <http://www.florilegium.com.au/>

Handprint.com (tech paint info) <http://handprint.com/HP/WCL/water.html>