

SUMMER 2018/19

Botanical Art Society NZ Inc

Summer

Letter from your editor

It certainly has been a hot summer. As I sit here typing this in Hanmer Springs, the temperature is up over 31deg C...again! It is lovely to have an excuse to sit indoors in the cool.

As you will notice the bulk of this newsletter is all about last years Botanical Art Worldwide, which has now finished it's travels. It has been a huge success with a goodly number of sales. Congratulations to all of you who took part.

I have included the leaflets from the exhibition which contains photos of all the paintings which were shown. This way those of you who were unable to go to the various exhibitions can get a small feel for what was there.

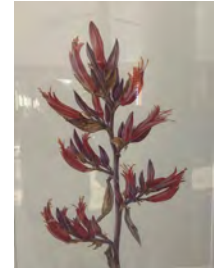
There is also an article about the amazing Jess Shepherd's workshop



Auckland
Botanic
Gardens



Denise Ramsay



Suzy Abbot

Botanical Art Worldwide 2018

This was THE botanical event of 2018 and a huge success for our steering committee of Lesley Alexander Smith, Sandra Morris and Liz Powell. They deserve a huge vote of thanks from all of us. They worked tirelessly to see that this event, in the first place even took place, and managed every aspect beautifully. Following is their report on the whole process.

BAWW - It's a Wrap!

By the steering committee: Lesley Alexander, Sandra Morris and Liz Powell

After two and a half years, 'Ngāi Tipu Taketake - Indigenous Flora', New Zealand's exhibition in the inaugural Botanical Art Worldwide exhibition, or BAWW as it became known to all involved in it, has come to an end!

The Beginning.....

What a journey it's been - it was in September 2016 when I first heard rumours about World Day of Botanical Art proposed by the American Society of Botanical Artists (ASBA). This was confirmed by Dianne Sutherland when she came over to run her first workshops - and she encouraged me to contact the ASBA with a view to NZ taking part! Little did we know then that this would virtually take over our lives for the foreseeable future!

Sandra Morris, Liz Powell and I became the New Zealand Steering Committee for the World Day of Botanical Art and accompanying exhibition, enlisting help from many people all round New Zealand. With establishment funding from BASNZ and the Friends of Auckland Botanic Gardens who agreed to host the exhibition, we were able to set about getting the word out there. It was a very steep learning curve for all of us - I even Googled what a steering committee was! However, everyone was very supportive, the ASBA were incredibly organised, guiding us every step of the way, answered what were probably very naïve questions but probably more importantly believed we could do it!

Once the ASBA had finalised their ideas we could start advertising the event. May 18th was designated 'World Day of Botanical Art' and each country would put on a botanical art exhibition of their native plants.

All artworks had to be of native plants and they had to be botanically accurate.

It was to be a juried exhibition, so we organised a jury consisting of Sri Benham, a botanical artist herself who started the Friends Art Group at Auckland Botanic Gardens, Ross Ferguson, a horticulturalist and botanical art collector and Bec Stanley who is a curator here at the Auckland Botanic Gardens.

There would be a slide show of each country's paintings - with a max of 40 artworks! Would we get anywhere near 40! We honestly had no idea. We knew that we would all submit at least one piece so that was 3, but would we get anymore?

The Middle.....

We knew artists would need a good amount of time to complete their paintings, so we had a few very busy months with lots of meetings and late night phone calls to get organised. We had contracts to write, organise an online submission form, design posters, terms and conditions etc. before we could call for submissions!

Once they were done, we spent many evenings emailing every artist we could think of including printmakers and pastel artists, sending posters and information to every art college, art centre, art society. We contacted all the university science departments, botanical societies, botanic gardens and anyone else we could think of.

Emails were sent gardening magazines, art magazines, radio stations and newspapers. Framers, printers and caterers had to be organized.

Luckily our enthusiasm for botanical art rubbed off, we kept telling everyone how botanical art was the 'next big thing' - and they believed us! We were invited to talk on the radio - twice, had articles written in 2 or 3 gardening magazines and a couple of articles in the Herald!

We had got the word out, we just had to sit back and wait for the artwork to come in and find time to paint our own submissions!

We were thrilled when we got our first submission - and it was a very good standard too! That was in March 2017, still 6 months before submissions would close. We were certain we would get more!

Worrying times.....

But the months went by, no more submissions came in - the closing date loomed nearer and nearer, and we were getting a bit worried, but thankfully about a month before the final submission day they started coming in!

Prior to that we were thinking that we could still go ahead and have an exhibition with 10 paintings if we had to but unbelievably, we ended up with 96 artworks from 53 artists!

We also decided to invite Auckland Secondary School students to submit work as they would be our next generation of botanical artists so that took the total up to 102 paintings and 56 artists!

The jury and how they decided...

The jury were only given the image, plant name and medium the artist used. They were instructed to pick a range of plants, styles from true traditional botanical art to more contemporary works, a range of sizes and media used. I think they got it spot on and of course delighted and relieved that our work got chosen! However, the jury were so impressed with the quality of the work, they not only chose their top 40, but chose their next top 20 and asked us if it was at all possible to hang them too! With wall space at the gardens being at a premium, we were delighted to get hold of some old panels which once restored meant that we were able to hang 56 paintings including 6 student works.

The Opening.....

The exhibition opened on March 30th, 2018 and we had a wonderful Private View a week later. Artists, family and friends along with sponsors and other dignitaries enjoyed an evening celebrating botanical art. We had artists come from all over New Zealand, it was fantastic be able to put faces to names and meet the artists whose artwork made the exhibition the success it was. New friendships were made that evening and a palpable sense of pride at what we, as a group of artists had produced.

Friday, May 18 was designated as World Wide Botanic Art Day and we were delighted that Jacque Carran, Suzy Abbott and Elizabeth Yuill Proctor were able to come up for the day and join in the celebrations. New Zealand, by virtue of our position relative to the International Date Line kicked off proceedings with a powhiri by members of Ngati Tamaoho, welcome speeches, demonstrations by eight artists and a talk by Dr Robert Franich and Bec Stanley on the *Dactylanthus*, its relationship with the short-tailed bat and plans to protect this endangered species.

Attendance over the three months of the Auckland exhibition was high - we estimate that over four thousand visitors came through the gallery - comments were positive, and sales of art works and the cards and prints provided by artists, were excellent. A series of well attended workshops was presented by a number of the artists during April and May.

BAWW on the Move...

Following the Auckland exhibition, the 40 artworks on the slideshow and the student works travelled to Wellington to the Tree House Gallery in the Wellington Botanic Gardens. Liz, Sandra and I travelled down to the opening on July 30 and joined an enthusiastic crowd of Wellington lovers of botanical art. Reports of attendance and sales of cards, prints and artwork from Wellington were again positive and enthusiastic - another very successful showing.

Finally, the exhibition travelled to Blenheim, to the Millennium Gallery, with the works displayed there from November 3 to December 9. Again, reports indicated an enthusiastic response to the exhibition - no art works sold but cards proved quite popular.

Prizes....

The 'People's Choice Award', sponsored by Gordon Harris Art Supplies, was won by Sue Wickison for her painting of '*Dactylanthus taylorii*' (Auckland) and Denise Ramsey for 'The Tree', a large watercolour of *Fuchsia excorticata* (Wellington) and the award for 'Best Secondary School Artwork', again sponsored by Gordon Harris was won by Nicola West for her watercolour painting of *Piper excelsum*

It's a wrap.....

The works were returned to Auckland in mid-December for distribution to buyers, many of whom had waited patiently from May to receive their works, and unsold works returned to artists.

Over the length of the exhibition 36 original works of art, 70 prints and over 1500 cards were sold - a huge success by any standards.

Thanks....

Our grateful thanks to those who have supported this wonderfully successful exhibition from the beginning

- BASNZ and Friends of Auckland Botanic Gardens for establishment funding
- Botanic Gardens staff and volunteers for all their practical and administrative help
- The artists for their participation and talent
- The judging panel for their expertise
- Jane Zimmerman and Jenny Haslimeier for the design of posters, advertising and brochures
- Annette Toon for website and e-news management
- Richard Mathieson and Phil Smith for gallery preparation and assistance with hanging works
- John Leech Framers for preparation of works for hanging
- Gordon Harris Art and Graphic Store for provision of People's Choice and Student awards.
- Carlee Reid, Team Leader, Customer Services, Wellington Botanic Gardens
- Cressida Bishop, Director, Millennium Public Art Gallery, Blenheim

We have just heard that the ASBA will be convening the 2nd International Congress of Botanical Art on Sunday, October 20th following ASBA's Annual Meeting and Conference in Pittsburgh. All steering committees are invited to attend and offer feedback....

'Goals of the Congress are to amplify the impact of Botanical Art Worldwide, to reflect upon the project's successes, challenges and surprises, and share and learn from each country's unique experience. Additional goals are to continue to foster collaboration among botanical art societies around the world, to promote the continued focus on plant diversity worldwide, establish May 18th as an annual Worldwide Day of Botanical Art and consider the organization of simultaneous exhibitions again in the future.'

Watch this space!

Sketchbook exchange: from Lesley Alexander Smith

Would any of you be interested in starting a nature journaling sketchbook exchange? I have been spending time nature journaling and loving it because 1, it lets me keep a record of what is around me at different times of the year, and 2 can be very quick - none of this labour intensive painting with the worry and pressure to get it accurate. Contact Lesley if you are interested places limited to 12 people - lesley.alexander.smith@gmail.com You would design one double page, starting in your own book, which would then be shared to the next person on the list - eventually you will get back your own book with 12 double pages done by group members. These are not complete works.



Jess Shepherd with the Sun Orchid - *Thelymitra formosa*. Subject of her next series of paintings.



JESS SHEPHERD WORKSHOP AUCKLAND 8 & 9 DEC 2018

Contributed by Sandra Morris

What a brilliant weekend we had in Auckland with the delightful Jess Shepherd - aka Inky Leaves!! 12 of us were treated to her inspiring style of teaching, taking the fear out of painting large leaves!

With the aid of a good phone camera or ipad, we could focus in on the detail and by using a grid method for scaling up, transfer this onto our tracing paper and then onto our watercolour paper to paint with a surprisingly vigorous brush technique. Most of us didn't get through an entire study but we learnt the basics and I for one am see to pursue large scale further. Jess's work shows that you don't need to always focus on a pretty flower portrait - beauty can be found in a dry gnarly leaf - the fascinating veins and patterns in closeup are astounding.

Check out Jess's website if you need convincing: <https://inkyleaves.com/>

It was lovely to catch up with friends and make new ones! The lovely setting at the Fernglen native gardens in Birkenhead was just perfect.

Jess and I were lucky to be able to go with Ewen Cameron - botanist at Auckland Museum, one afternoon to Waikumete Cemetery searching for *Thelymitra* (Blue sun orchid) to add to Jess's collection of research photos for her work on blue flower. The sun came out just in time so we could see at least one flower open! A quick visit next day to the gannet colony at Muriwai and walk along this west coast beach satisfied Jess and I think she felt she had experienced some of the delights of Auckland.



The following is kindly reproduced by kind permission of Dianne Sutherland Ball from her blogspot - well worth a visit for great information and tips. I was unable to add the photographs, so do click on the link and see them <http://diannesutherland.blogspot.com/2016/>

SATURDAY, 20 AUGUST 2016

Which Brush? Spotters and Miniatures

I'm often asked about which is the best brush for botanical work but as usual there's no simple answer! I use lots of types of brushes for different jobs! So will break this into brush types, starting with a post on one type of brush; the miniature or spotter. Here's my own opinion on 5 different brushes in the range.

What is a miniature or spotter? Both miniature and spotter brushes are short haired brushes that allow excellent control for fine detail work, this feature makes them very useful to botanical artists who favour dry brush and fine detail techniques, and is especially good for the vellum painter. A spotter is much the same as a miniature but sometimes has a slightly fatter belly, both should have a sharp tapered point for extra fine detail.

What size of spotter is best? I don't often use anything anything smaller than a size 1 and in these brushes certainly no larger than a size 3, although sizes seem to vary between manufacturers.

For washes I use round or pointed brushes which have longer hairs and size 5 or 6 plus, I also use flats for some jobs such as lifting and half riggers for long flowing lines. I'll discuss them some other time in a separate post.

The five brushes left to right: Winsor & Newton Series 7 miniature, Rosemary & Co spotter, David Jackson spotter, Raphael 8048 and Pro Arte series 107

The 5 Brushes

Winsor and Newton Series 7 miniatures, Kolinsky sable size 1 £8.25 - £12

One of the most popular brushes and one that I've used for many years, but have noticed some inconsistency in quality over the past few years with stray and bent hairs. It's a lovely looking brush though and handles well. It appears to be made with hairs slightly longer hairs in the middle compared to the outside, I think maybe for this reason they splay slightly sometimes. But it's generally a really good 'all rounder' and has a lovely point, which is superior to the Rosemary and Co but not as good as the David Jackson or the Raphael although probably on a par with the Pro Arte. The lines that I painted with it were fine but not as clean as others. It's good for dry brush work but it's an expensive brush to wears out if you use it for this purpose. I feel like the hairs are finer and softer than say the Raphael but not as soft as the Rosemary & Co, great for very delicate work, where little pressure is required, such as on vellum.

Rosemary & Co spotter series 325, size 1 £4.25

Half the price of most sable brushes, to me this spotter is really a different type of brush.

Looking at the 5 brushes together, you can immediately see that it's much fatter in the belly than the other miniatures and has more hairs which seem softer and possibly finer - I should really put this to the test under the microscope but this is just a quick post! The point seems to dull quite quickly, possibly because of the finer hair, but initially it's a good enough point and if you don't paint so much it should last a while. The biggest problem I have with Rosemary & Co brushes is the splaying of hairs, worse than W & N and which happens fairly early on in the life of the brush, and even more so with the longer haired round / pointed brushes. The point is less tapered too and this tends to result in less of a smooth fine line compared to the David Jackson and the Raphael brushes, on close analysis the fine lines are more broken up and therefore less contact is made with the paper so perhaps this is to do with the chunky build and maybe a bit more water is needed.

Having said all that, this brush comes into its own for 'modelling' dry brush work and I use it largely for this purpose. It lasts for ages and is actually better with some wear. In particular, I love it for what I call 'polishing' dry brush work on vellum, which is an approach that I use to add a very fine layer of colour over previous dry brush to give shine, it's a very dry approach using quite a bit of pressure which allows me to layer, similar to the equivalent of a final wash on a watercolour. Below is an example of using a Rosemary and Co spotter on a maple leaf to get the 'polished, look on vellum!

Exhibition News!!!

This year's exhibition will be at Rangiora Chambers Gallery (inside Rangiora library) between 22 September to 31 October 2019, Name of this exhibition is *Botanica 2019*

The gallery will charge 20% commission on works sold. Hanging and tear down dates to be announced. Paintings must be at BASNZ one month prior to exhibition and be ready to hang with mats attached to backing. Further info will be sent out soon.