



BOTANICAL
ART SOCIETY
OF NEW ZEALAND INC



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Welcome to our Winter issue!

This issue sees Emma Scheltema join the team. I hope you all enjoy her layout design as much as I do. It has taken a huge load off my shoulders! Welcome Emma!

Winter has been a bit up and down temperature wise. We even had quite a bit of snow in Hanmer Springs Village, the first time in nearly 10 years. Very pretty it looked too and a wonderful excuse to stay in the studio and paint.

Our Featured Artist this issue is Tina Grey from Christchurch. I have long admired Tina's work. Lisa Dickson continues her Brilliant Story of Colour series. This issue looks at Yellow. I am certainly enjoying learning more about the colours we use in our work. Vicky Jones gave us a fascinating talk on the making of paper from Harekeke at our inaugural Zoom General Meeting last month and I asked her if she would share the information for us in this issue.

We also had Jane Zimmerman all the way from Norway give us a fascinating talk with illustrations of Alpine Plants. We are hoping to make the Zoom General Meetings a regular feature. If you have anything you would like to share, or something you would like to know more about please get in touch. We also finally have something in our "Buy - Sell - Exchange" section. If you have any art gear you would like to buy, sell or exchange please email us at newsletter.basnzinc@gmail.com

Keep the paint flowing!

- Elizabeth



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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Winter this year has certainly thrown us some curve balls, what with storms, power outages and now, as I write this, a country wide Level 4 Lockdown. I'll certainly be glad to see Spring arrive!

With physical workshops being on hold at the moment, I am really delighted that we have Irish botanical artist, Shevaun Doherty (<https://shevaundoherty.com>) giving a workshop on painting bees. If you joined us for our AGM on Zoom, you would have 'met' her and heard how she came to be very involved with native bees, horrified at their decline in numbers and her wish to publicise their importance. Should be a very interesting workshop. I work with quite a limited palette whereas Shevaun uses every colour she can, so I am looking forward to trying out lots of my colour relegated to the 'not botanical' tin!

A few of our members, myself included, are painting furiously to finish work for the Friends of Auckland Botanic Gardens Art Group annual exhibition. The exhibition, 'The Art of Healing – medicine, myth and magic' has had me researching all sorts of plants, potions and poisons and finding some really bizarre and frankly horrifying use of plants over the ages!

Did you know that the herbs mentioned in the song 'Are you Going to Scarborough Fair' were used to ward off the Black Death? The parsley, sage, rosemary and thyme in the song, were made, along with other herbs and spices, into a potion to keep fleas, who were responsible along with rats for spreading the disease, away. Another story goes that four thieves in Marseille, France were robbing the houses and graves of the sick and dead but not contracting the very highly contagious bubonic plague. It is said they used what became known as 'Four Thieves Vinegar' - a concoction of various herbs in vinegar. 'Four Thieves Vinegar', albeit a different recipe, and products such as Thieves toothpaste, mouthwash and soap are sold today.



Title page of "The Grete Herball" by Peter Treveris, printed in London in 1526 and illustrated with woodcuts. (Photo: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Public domain)

Unfortunately, I spent too much time researching, disappearing down too many rabbit holes only to find that the plants I found so fascinating were either not available, out of season or illegal to sell - yes, to sell or buy the shrieking mandrake from Harry Potter fame, with it's hallucinogenic and narcotic properties is a criminal offense in certain countries. So I'm relying on the cheerful pansies growing on my deck as inspiration for my entry! Never knew pansies had so many super powers!

We hope to hang the exhibition early September but Covid19 may have other plans! I'm sure there must be an, as yet undiscovered, family of plants that could knock Covid out for 6!

Oh, by the way, our website is nearly there – you'll be the first to know when it goes 'live'!

Happy painting, drawing, creating – hope to 'see' you at a meeting soon!

- Lesley Alexander

FEATURED ARTIST: Tina Grey

Tina Grey is originally from England, arriving in New Zealand in the early 2000's.

Tina is one of the original members of The Botanical Art Society Inc and was on the committee for many years. She remains very active within the Society and also within the Avice Hill Group in Christchurch. Tina is very welcoming to members at Avice Hill and shares her knowledge readily with the newcomers.

The following answers are in Tina's own words:



Who or what inspired you to start painting?

I did a one day course of Botanical Drawing at the local college and then continued this part-time for six years using only graphite.

Do you have a botanical hero?

Rory McEwen. I love the detail of his leaves etc. I also admire many other artists for the colour they achieve in their watercolour work.

Can you tell us about your experience (& medal) with the RHS UK?

I applied to the Royal Horticultural Society for a placement in one of their yearly exhibitions. I had to submit three paintings to be jury judged, and was accepted.

I was allocated a stand in the November 2001 show. You had to have a theme and eight paintings, which was presented together as a package. My subject was "Decayed Leaves" in graphite. The day after the show your award (if any) is pinned onto your stand.

However that day for some reason the judging was late and each artist went duly to do their stewarding of their own exhibition. The lady came round to me and I couldn't find a card, so I thought never mind, it's all an experience. But she returned a few minutes later, and handed me a card which stated Gold Medal! That took me a few hours to get my head around!

During the show all but one of my paintings sold. One of them was going to Lindley Library. Having already shown at the Society of Botanical Artists in London, I was then accepted as a member for several years.

If you had to choose a six colour palette which would you choose and why?

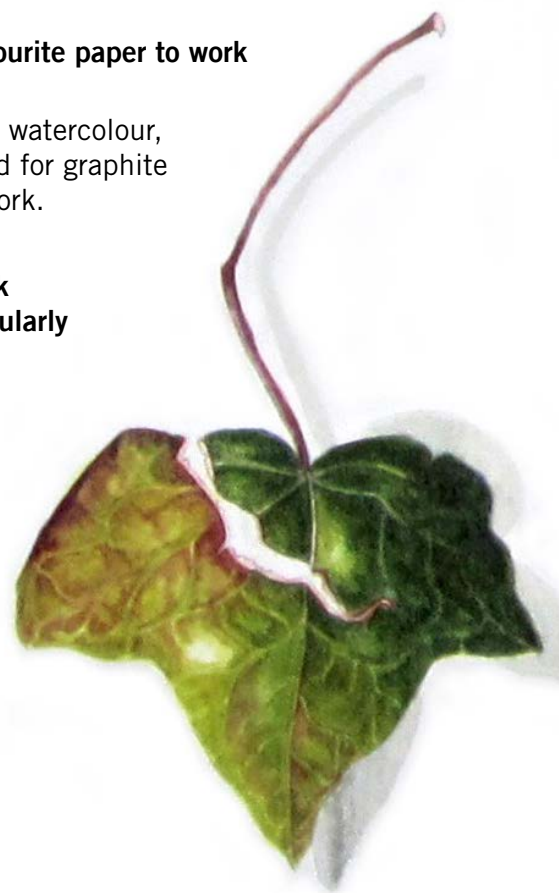
French Ultramarine, Perylene Maroon, New Gamboge, Lemon Yellow, Permanent Rose, Burnt Sienna. I have used all of these for Autumn Leaves.

What is your favourite paper to work with?

Arches Paper for watercolour, and Bristol Board for graphite and pen & ink work.

Is there one book you would particularly recommend?

"How to draw Plants" by Keith West. Heaps of information for starting out in Botanical work.



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Which artists do you find most useful to follow online?

Dianne Sutherland and Lizzie Harper- both are damp to dry painters. Ann Swan for colour pencil work, which is what I progressed to from graphite.

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

Patience and practice every day, and have your own work space.

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

I like Dianne Sutherlands' method of laying down the blues for the darker areas first, which gives me a map of where to start.



The Brilliant Story of Colour - YELLOW

If like me, you have the winter blues, there is nothing like the colour yellow to warm us up and remind us of warmer months to come.



Yellow ochre

One of the oldest pigments, yellow ochre is a natural earth pigment consisting mostly of clay coloured iron oxides. Under heat, the pigment produces a range of colours from pale yellow through to yellowish red. Ochres are among the most widely used pigments and date back to prehistoric times.

Ochre (from the Greek Ochros, meaning yellowish) is still extracted naturally today, but as the colour of the natural earth pigments varies per location, so does the shade of colour in the paint tube. For this reason, synthetic variants (made using synthetic iron oxides) were developed which retained consistent colour from one batch to another. Some watercolourists prefer the behaviour of natural pigments (e.g. Natural Yellow Ochre - PY43), while others prefer the consistency of synthetics (e.g. Yellow Ochre - PY42).

Gamboge

Gamboge is a gum resin produced by various species of evergreen trees, the most commonly used is the gamboge tree (genus *Garcinia*), found in Cambodia, Thailand, India and Sri Lanka. The earliest use of gamboge was in East Asia in the 8th century, and gamboge is the traditional colour used to dye Buddhist monks' robes.

The pigment first reached Europe in the early 17th century and was notably used by Rembrandt and Turner. Gamboge also has strong laxative properties, and has been used in medicine as a purgative. Well known for its transparency, genuine gamboge had poor lightfastness. Many companies stopped producing genuine gamboge, replacing it with the more permanent New Gamboge.



Image via <https://janeblundellart.blogspot.com/2016/09/gamboge.html>



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Cadmium Yellow

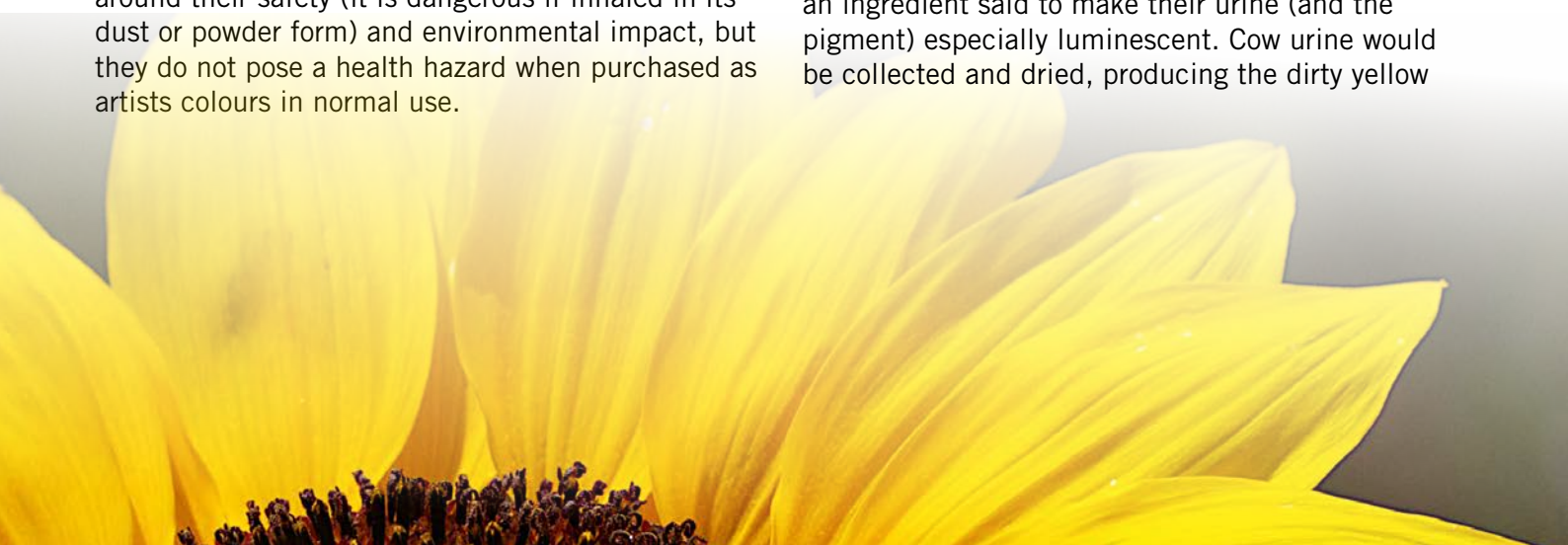
Cadmium yellow pigments provide a wide range of colours, from the lightest (cadmium lemon) to the darkest (cadmium yellow deep). Cadmium yellow pigments originate from the sulfide family, and are found naturally in the earth's crust. They are very versatile and are easily mixed into different mediums, so are available in oils, acrylics, watercolours and gouache. Completely permanent, cadmiums are light fast and brilliant in hue. Discovered in 1817 by a German chemist (Friedrich Stromeyer), cadmium yellow has been popular since the late 19th century. Prior to its discovery, artists used a mineral based pigment called orpiment (from the Latin auripigmentum meaning gold and pigment). Brilliant yellows in historical works are likely to be orpiment, but it was gradually replaced as it was highly toxic, containing arsenic compounds.

About half of the cadmium produced globally is used to produce pigment (around 2,000 tons annually). As well as artists materials, they are used to colour plastics and to create speciality paints. Cadmium pigments have been in use since 1840. They are completely permanent, have a good tinting strength and are incredibly brilliant. There has been concern around their safety (it is dangerous if inhaled in its dust or powder form) and environmental impact, but they do not pose a health hazard when purchased as artists colours in normal use.



Indian yellow

A beautiful and historically fascinating pigment, Indian yellow is a vivid orange-yellow pigment originating from India. It was introduced to Europe around the 16th century and used until it became commercially unavailable in the early 20th century (under mysterious circumstances). It was used by Vermeer, Turner and Van Gogh, who painted a luminous Indian yellow moon in his famous *Starry Night*. The origin of the pigment was largely unknown at the time of its popularity. For years, soft lumps of yellow had arrived in sealed packages at the London docks from Calcutta in India – some addressed to Messers Winsor & Newton. The dirty balls would be washed and purified. The actual ingredients remained a mystery, but due to the strong odour of ammonia, they were thought to contain camel urine. In 1883 Sir Joseph Hooker, the botanist and director of Kew Gardens, tried to get to the bottom of the mystery. He wrote to the Indian Department of Revenue and Agriculture to ask about the pigment's source. The reply stated that cowherds fed their cattle only water and mango leaves, an ingredient said to make their urine (and the pigment) especially luminescent. Cow urine would be collected and dried, producing the dirty yellow



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balls that were being packaged off to London. The letter was published in the Royal Society of Arts Journal and soon after the pigment disappeared, thought to be a result of animal cruelty protests (the process left the cattle undernourished) that led to a law forbidding further production. Some believe the story to be a hoax or tall tale (there was no evidence of the law), although the letter existed, and chemical analysis confirms the presence of animal urine in the pigment.

The original formulation (whatever it was) has long since been removed from production, and modern Indian Yellow formulas differ across suppliers with pigment PY110 being a reliable substitute.

- Lisa Dickson



Indian Yellow can be seen in Van Gogh's *Starry Night* 1889 (top left), Turner's *The Angel Standing in the Sun* 184 (top right), and the lantern lights in Sargent's *Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose* 1886 (bottom).

Making Harakeke paper - Notes from Pakohe

When a group of us signed up for a weekend workshop making paper from Harakeke (NZ Flax) we thought we would learn about a new craft, but we learned so much more! Marty and Marilyn Vreede run the workshops from their home in Whanganui, and welcomed us as whanau... and they shared their love of life and what they do as we learned about the craft of papermaking... we got to know Marty and Marilyn and also a bit more about ourselves. I would thoroughly recommend you getting together with a group of friends and experiencing it for yourself!

Marty is an artist specialising in printmaking – he has been head of Printmaking at Whanganui UCOL's School of Arts; he has been a Nuffield and Fulbright Scholar, an artist in residence and was awarded the Prime Minister's Supreme Award for teaching in 2010. Marilyn is an artist in her own right, and together with Marty they own and run Pakohe Papers making harakeke paper products, offering workshops in papermaking and printing, and making Maori educational resources. They both love sharing their knowledge, and they do that by learning alongside the people they share with.

Marty and Marilyn began the workshop with personal introductions and an introduction to harakeke. In making paper from Harakeke, Marty and Marilyn are guided by a Tikanga that aligns their practice with harakeke weavers and the Pa harakeke. The main resources for the papermaking are the harakeke cuttings and leftovers from the weavers.

We learned about how frequent harvesting means softer rau (leaves). We learned how to respect the plants – karakia first to seek permission, and not harvesting the rito (centre) and the two sets of leaves immediately below the rito. Instead the outer leaves... the 'great grandparents' of the rito! We also learned that harakeke is not harvested in the rain because it's full of water. It needs to be dry.

Marilyn says, "Even the dried up leaves still have usable fibre. Just proves that we can be withered, old and dried up but still useful"



King, Martha 1803?-1897 :The phormium tenax, or New Zealand flax. Drawn by Miss King. [1842] Day & Haghe. London, Smith, Elder [1845]

The Process

We began with the dried rau (leaves) which are fed through an old chaff cutter. This reduced the leaves to pieces about 1 inch long – longer pieces mean the fibre tangles as it is handled.

The flax is then boiled in caustic soda (Soda ash) for 2-3 days to get rid of the lignin and para (kiri) (waxy outer skin). For safety reasons this happens outside with good ventilation! The length of time depends on the type of paper being made. The coarser the paper the less boiling time needed. The boil up is stirred 3 to 4 times a day.

After cooling down for 2-3 days the fibre is washed, and washed, and washed, and washed! It is now ready for the Hollander Beater. The washed fibre is put into the Hollander Beater which pulls the fibres apart. At this point waste paper scraps can also be added – there's no waste! There is approximately two hours of beating, depending on the type of paper being made – finer paper takes longer.

The fibre is either left as natural colour or it is steeped in bleach for a period of time. The most popular paper is Muka White which is the longest beaten fibre and bleached.



There is approximately two hours of beating, depending on the type of paper being made – finer paper takes longer.



Pulling a sheet of A3 paper

We began by making A3 sized paper. We added the fibres (at this point known as half-stuff) to a vat of water and mixed it thoroughly, agitating it with our hands to 'float' the fibres. We then placed a frame known as a deckle on top of the mould (a fine screen mounted in a wooden frame). This was then lowered into the water, on an angle. We then used our hands to agitate the fibres again, to evenly distribute them over the surface of the frame and deckle.

The frame and deckle are then lifted carefully out of the water, trying to keep them level so that the fibres settle evenly over the screen... this takes a bit of practice, and there were quite a few frames that got put back in the water to have another go!

The deckle is then removed from the frame. At this point we placed the frame, paper side down, onto a sheet of non-woven weed mat and then used a chux cloth to mop up the excess water from the back side of the paper, through the screen. The screen is then carefully lifted off the sheet of paper ... it remains on the weed mat. This is the exciting part... A piece of paper is made!

As we continued to make sheets of paper – and get better at it! – we made a tall sandwich alternating paper and weed mat to form what is known as a 'post' of paper. At the end of the day the post was clamped between boards to squeeze out the water. The next day the sheets were spread out to dry. They were then placed in a pile again, and put in a press overnight.

You may have noticed... there is a lot of water about in this process – we did all this outside, and gumboots and waterproof aprons were the fashion items of the weekend!



Making larger sheets

We also made some larger pieces of paper – this is a two person team effort, and it was interesting to see how relationships worked for this! It's a great team building activity! The process of pulling a sheet is similar, putting the frame and deckle in the trough of water, and pulling the frame up out of the water, but two people are needed to keep the frame even, and care needs to be taken not to drip water onto the paper when you lift off the deckle... otherwise you get little semi-transparent thin spots on your paper! We used a wet vacuum cleaner on the back of the frame to suck the excess water from the sheet of paper. These frames were then spread around the garden in the sun to dry. Once the big sheets were dry we could gently remove them from the frames.

Tissue paper

Some of our group also had a go at making very thin tissue paper... it took quite a while to work out how little fibre was needed, and how to get the screen still evenly covered with fibre before pulling the sheet.

Calendering

We then used Marty's printing press to calender the sheets – this gives the sheets a smoother surface.

This was such a fun weekend – I would thoroughly recommend it. It was a great thing to do with friends, and we have used our paper in a variety of ways – including making books, and I had one of my pencil drawings giclee printed onto a piece as my entry into the Botanical Art Exhibition recently held in Whanganui.

Marty and Marilyn's contact details are:

Marty & Marilyn Vreede
Directors

Pakohe Whanganui Ltd

Phone (06) 344 6873

Cell: 0276 3446873

www.pakohewhanganui.co.nz

(the website has not been updated for a while, but has some great pictures of the papermaking process.

Give Marilyn or Mary a ring, or email to arrange dates that work for your group and fits for them)

- Vicki Jones

1480 Kakaramea Road

R D 10,

Hamilton

021 0317735

“Even the dried up leaves still have usable fibre. Just proves that we can be withered, old and dried up but still useful”

INTERNET

Cruising around the internet - as one does, I came across another take on Botanical Art. A Russian Fibre Artist, **Rosa Andreeva** creates exquisite pieces of art using embroidery. You can see them here:

<https://www.thisiscolossal.com/2021/01/rosa-andreeva-embroidery/>

An article that was published in The Guardian (UK) back in 2016 entitled ***A Celebration of Botanical Art Throughout History in Pictures*** has works going back as far as c.1500BC including a Fresco found on the island of Santorini. The images jump around through the ages (not sequentially) but it is a fascinating read as well as a delight for the eyes.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/gallery/2016/oct/10/a-celebration-of-botanical-art-throughout-history-in-pictures>

This is a delightful video that has been put out by **Kew Gardens** and how Botanical Art plays an important role in Kew's Scientific work - it is only just over 2 minutes long but well worth a watch:
https://youtu.be/_B6yRDDxOzw



Botanical illustrations aren't just art. They communicate precisely what's needed for the taxonomic science.

*- Maria Vorontsova, Research Leader
(Kew Gardens)*



Page from Dara Shikoh Album, c.1633. Opaque watercolour and gold on paper, British Library, London (via *A Celebration of Botanical Art Throughout History in Pictures*)

A longer watch is this one by **Sandrine Maugy** which gives 13 of her top tips. Sandrine also has a website at: sandrinemaugy.com



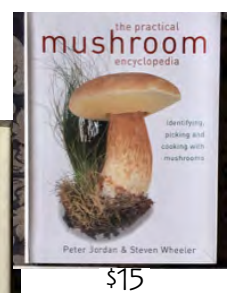
BUY - SELL - EXCHANGE

Terrie Reddish has a number of botanical art related books for sale. They are in excellent condition but surplus to requirements. Shipping is in addition to prices below. Get in touch with Terrie to purchase any of these books.



P O Box 28 208
Havelock North 4157
New Zealand
+64 6 877 8040
021 182 3440
Email: pencilart@terrie-reddish.co.nz
www.instagram.com/terriereddish/
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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