

# Botanical Art

## • QUEENSLAND •

Newsletter of the Botanical Artists' Society of Queensland  
Autumn 2019

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*Syzygium australe*, watercolour. © Tanya Hoolihan

## What is a botanical artist?

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### BASQ

The Botanical Artists' Society of Queensland (BASQ) is a voluntary, non-profit organisation formed to foster a greater knowledge, love and understanding of Botanical Art.

The Society's focus is two-fold: to provide courses for those beginning or improving their art, and to exhibit members' art.

This biannual newsletter will keep you informed of BASQ's current happenings. If you would like to contribute, please email [news@botanicalartqld.com.au](mailto:news@botanicalartqld.com.au) by **1 September 2019** for the Autumn edition.

# From the president

Welcome to 2019. The beginning of the year seems to have disappeared in a flash. The management committee began the year planning the Annual and General meetings. Thank you to all who attended and who provided feedback and discussion points enabling the Society to continue to progress.

All committee positions were filled except for workshop coordinator and vice-president. These are very important roles so please consider if you could undertake one.

Kay Sullivan indicated 2019 would be her last year as secretary, and I am happy to continue until March 2021. This forward planning provides everyone with opportunities to take on roles and contribute to the strength and growth of our Society.

Florescence 2019 will afford you with the opportunity to exhibit in a different space. Please work towards one piece of top quality art. If we all produce one piece, the exhibition will be superb. One piece of top quality artistry is much better than a few mediocre pieces. Seek colleague feedback as you plan your composition and fine tune your techniques so you can all be proud of your contribution to Florescence 2019.

...

Dr Nita C Lester

## Guide to BASQ classes

The following is a guide for people considering enrolling in BASQ classes:

**Beginner:** no prior instruction in botanical drawing or painting techniques.

**Intermediate:** emerging ability in botanical drawing and painting techniques; basic knowledge of perspective and composition; ability to control wash and recognise colour mixes.

**Advanced:** ability to accurately depict the subject so that it can be identified by a botanist; understands botanical drawing techniques with a sound knowledge of composition; able to control the application of colour with excellent colour mixing and glazing skills; can apply perspective.

## From the president (continued)

There has been an amazing response to the last call for expression of interest to join the Banks, Solander and Parkinson project. Over half the promised art pieces are completed and the remainder will begin to move towards completion over the next couple of months. The deadline is the 1 August 2019. Soon details of delivery will be forwarded to each individual artist. How the time has flown?

Remember please do not add the name of the species or the year – only your signature. This is very important to remember as you design your composition for this special exhibition opening in May 2020.

Best wishes to you all and if you have any ideas for our Society that you would like the committee and members to consider, please contact Kay Sullivan.

■ nita



Brisbane Institute of Art (Metcalfe Gallery). Photo: Weekend Notes.

## BASQ Officers 2019

### Committee positions

#### President:

Dr Nita C Lester  
• nita.c.lester@gmail.com  
• 07 5445 7182  
• PO Box 465, Mapleton, QLD 4560

#### Vice-president:

vacant

#### Treasurer:

Naomi Florence  
• treasurer@botanicalartqld.com.au

#### Assistant treasurer:

Narelle Sutton  
• treasurer@botanicalartqld.com.au

#### Secretary:

Kay Sullivan  
• secretary@botanicalartqld.com.au  
07 3300 1702  
22 Anthony Court,  
Deception Bay, QLD 4058

#### Assistant secretary:

vacant

#### Exhibitions coordinator & publicity officer:

Kath Kerswell  
• exhibition@botanicalartqld.com.au

#### Workshop coordinator:

vacant

#### Newsletter editor & website manager:

Florence Joly  
• news@botanicalartqld.com.au

## Non-committee positions

#### Administrative assistant:

Margaret Abbott  
• admin@botanicalartqld.com.au

#### Native plants Queensland shows:

Dorothy Muller  
• rd.muller@bigpond.com

#### Newsletter assistant:

Marcelle Stirling

# Artist Profile ~ Tanya Hoolihan

**A**s I reflect on my involvement with my art and the environment, I begin to realise that my journey down the path of becoming a botanical illustrator has been full of many unforeseen turns and detours. From an early age I always had a need to create. Each new craft fad or art form was approached with great fervor and I tried my hand at a variety of techniques. Although I enjoyed them all, I still felt that none were a life long endeavour.

I loved school but had no great ambition or set career path and left in year 11 to work in the family business. In my spare time I continued my interest in art and enrolled in general art lessons at a local studio. Gouache was my favourite medium because of the fine detail that could be achieved in my work. I painted a variety of subjects and exhibited in local art exhibitions where I won several regional art prizes. However, the increasing demands of running a business, newly married life and the arrival of our first son left little time for art practice and for a period of 15 years I put aside my paints and brushes for other priorities.

After selling our business in 2004, I found myself back on track pursuing my creative passions. I stumbled across a feature article in the *Australian Artist* magazine, on botanical artist Heidi Willis. I contacted Heidi and she kindly invited me to her studio to see her work. She suggested I join a likeminded group of artists who met once a week at a local gallery to practice botanical art. The Central Coast Botanical Art Group (CCBAGs) worked together by helping and offering each other advice on technique and subject matter. I joined the group and learnt so much about watercolour as a medium and botanical art in general.



*Castanospermum australe*, watercolour

Later that same year I submitted work for the exhibition *Flora*, organised by the Botanical Art Society of Australia (BASA). I was judged first in the native section and my work was selected as the signature piece for the following year's exhibition.

In 2010, I was honoured to be invited to exhibit in the prestigious exhibition, *Botanica* held by the Friends of the Royal Botanic Gardens in Sydney. In 2015, I contributed an illustration of the Dragons Blood Tree (*Dracaena draco*) to the *RBG Florilegium*. Last year, in 2018, I was honoured to have this work hung in the Shirley Sherwood Gallery in Kew Gardens.



*Doryanthes excelsa*, watercolour

I also discovered a degree in Natural History Illustration offered through the University of Newcastle. It is the only type of this degree in Australia and one of only a few offered internationally. After much consideration I decided that this was the new direction I would take. After gaining a Higher School Certificate through Open Foundation, I was accepted into the Natural History degree the following year. Once completed I went onto finish Honours, Masters and last year was awarded my PhD in Natural History Illustration. My higher degree research allowed me to combine my love of Australian history, my German heritage and my passion for botanical illustration. Through my studies I analysed the travel journals and letters of the German born explorer Ludwig Leichhardt and produced a series of botanical paintings that illustrated



*Cyathea australis*, watercolour

specimens he had recorded and collected over 170 years ago. I currently lecture in botanical illustration for the University and am grateful for all that I have learnt through participation in the degree over the past 10 years.

I feel privileged to have met so many kind and good-natured people through botanical art who are both passionate about their work, but also so encouraging and helpful to others.

In 2015 I joined the Botanical Art Society of Queensland and I am constantly amazed at the innovative and forward approach the members have towards botanical art. Their passion is very encouraging and motivating. I enjoy my involvement with this group and look forward to being part of the Banks and Solander exhibition in 2020.

I currently work from my studio in Jiliby on the Central Coast of NSW, and feel extremely fortunate to have found an art form that suits my attention to detail, has an almost infinite amount of subject matter and at present is enjoying a well-deserved resurgence in popularity. Botanical art allows me to combine my love of creating with my passion for the natural world and environment. I have long given up all other craft and art pursuits and now consider myself a fulltime botanical illustrator. However, I hopefully have not yet reached the end of my journey and I look forward with anticipation in what the next turn on the path may reveal.

■ **Tanya Hoolihan**

# Workshop review

## Specimen selection, preparation and botanical illustration

Nita C Lester



Documenting colour swatches of collected specimens

Last year was important for artists working on the Banks and Solander exhibition project, many of whom are locating their plant specimens in national parks and botanic gardens. In this workshop, Nita outlined the steps to consider in the selection and data collection required to submit the specimen to a botanist for identification.

Specimens may wilt and change rapidly once removed from the plant. Topics and exercises included onsite sketches and colour observations of the plant, its habit and habitat, photographic techniques through to pressing and mounting the plant. We were also introduced to the importance of GPS location and references, including plant identification through tools such as PlantNET and species guides to observe plants over a full year to capture new growth, flowering, fruiting and seedpods.



Documenting in the field

The emphasis was on capturing data consistently, and students were tasked with homework to collect specimens for the second workshop day. One of the interesting highlights was the discussion on preparing the specimens for drawing by employing 'artistic pruning' to both highlight the key characteristics of the plant and create the finished artwork.

Kath Kerswell, exhibition coordinator

## Where to begin?

What is a botanical artist? Why did you become a botanical artist in the first place? We, as adults, are all hesitant to start something new, to try something we know very little about.

A number of my students, in the Sunshine Coast area, have all shown excitement to begin the journey but hesitate at times to mark the paper. There are thoughts that hold them back. Sometimes they think they have no ability, 'I am only a beginner' and 'I can not draw a straight line'.

Or perhaps it was a comment made as a child by a parent or a teacher, that you have no artistic talent.

Every endeavour has a beginning as Cook's journey displayed, and our own *Artistic Endeavours* exhibition for 2020 is demonstrating that. We begin to learn as soon as we recognise the limits of our knowledge.

So called 'mistakes' are part of this learning and in time build confidence. One of my students said last week: 'Oh, I made yet another mistake, but I know now how to correct it. Every time I muck up, I learn a new skill. My art is improving with every class'.

Follow your love of plants, colour and spaces, and trust your instincts. The efforts given to botanical art are richly rewarding.

Put pencil to paper and enjoy making your art come alive.



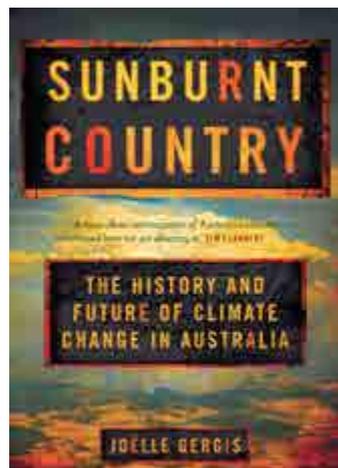
Sketch, *Grevillea* sp. © Florence Joly

Nita C Lester, BASQ president

## General review

### BOOK: *Sunburnt Country: the History and Future of Climate Change in Australia*

Joëlle Gergis  
Melbourne University  
Press, 2018



Where do BASQ members find the flowers, plants that you paint or draw? Do you just walk out into your garden and pick a favourite, or go bush and work 'en plein air' on native plants, or do you just see something at a local florist or supermarket which appeals, but which may have come from anywhere in the world?

Thirty-four years after sailing up Australia's East Coast on Cook's *Endeavour* voyage Sir Joseph Banks and six other distinguished gentlemen sat down together to inaugurate what became the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS). As BASQ members will be aware winning a Gold Medal from the RHS is one of the world's highest awards in botanical painting. The RHS has been providing its members with information on their gardening practices for many years, and over recent decades it has also included information on climate change and global warming and warning of its impact on gardening practices.

I am not aware of such information specifically directed at gardeners here in Australia. However, a recent estimate I saw for the impact of Global Warming here in Australia indicated that by the end of this century Australia's climate zones will have shifted; Sydney's climate will resemble that of Brisbane's current climate while Brisbane's climate will be like that of Queensland's Tropical North, if there is no check on what is already happening. What flowers will botanical artists then be growing in their gardens or finding in the bush?

I strongly recommend that members read *Sunburnt Country: the History and Future of Climate Change in Australia*, published to much acclaim last year. Written by Dr Joëlle Gergis of the University of Melbourne it provides a history of changes in Australia's climate, using records made since Europeans landed in Australia together with long term records that climate scientists use gained from tree rings, etc. She provides clear outlines of the significant regional and worldwide forces that go to shape our climate, such as El Niño, to help readers understand seasonal changes as well as how they can vary in their strength and their subsequent impact on Australia. The final chapters provide details of the likely changes that will occur here in Australia if climate change is unchecked.

The book was published in 2018 although inevitably the data used went only up to 2016. I found it shocking that the weather that we have now had in the last six months in particular more than bears out climate scientists' prognostications of the devastating changes in our climate that are likely to occur, indeed are occurring right now.

The plants BASQ members will be able to grow in their gardens or find in the bush to paint in 10, 25 or 50 years from now are likely to be very different from what you can find today. This book will give you the information you need to be able to understand that what you are painting now is likely to be of historical significance unless Global Warming can be held in check – which can only happen if we all undertake to change the way we live now.

## What to decide?

### *Choosing a microscope for your botanical studies*



It is very likely that in our studies of the botanical world, we will need a microscope, to identify species and go into the intricate details of our subjects.

Yes, but which one?

Some members have cheap digital ones – others have stereo microscopes, worth \$1000s of dollars.

As always, you get what you pay for. The cheaper digital ones, while convenient at first, might not do the job for very long. You will have to get into the pricer options with better specifications – a 5 MP camera should be a minimum, with optical zoom.

The stereo microscopes are more expensive again, but well worth the investment.

What do you think?

Members are welcome to give their input on this question and we will publish it in the next newsletter.

Contact Florence at [news@botanicalartqld.com.au](mailto:news@botanicalartqld.com.au)



## BEYOND BRISBANE

Just because you don't live in Brisbane doesn't mean you can't enjoy meeting up with like-minded people who enjoy botanical art. Lots\* of regional groups exist in Queensland:

### Gympie Botanical Art Group

Meets Tuesdays 1–4 pm at the Gympie Regional Gallery.

Contact Jan Tabler at [tabler.jan@gmail.com](mailto:tabler.jan@gmail.com) for details.

### Mackay Botanical Art Interest Group

Meets at the Mackay Regional Botanic Gardens twice a month.

Contact Madge Barnett at [madge.barnett@bigpond.com](mailto:madge.barnett@bigpond.com) for details.

### Noosa Botanical Art Group

Meets at Wallace House, Noosaville on Monday afternoons from 1 pm–4 pm.

Contact Pauline Putland on (07) 5449 9223.

### Sunshine Coast Art Group

Offers workshops.

Contact Nita Lester at [nita.c.lester@gmail.com](mailto:nita.c.lester@gmail.com) for details.

### Tablelands to Downs Group

Meets at different places/homes each time, and sometimes at Stanthorpe Art Gallery, from 10 am–3 pm on the fourth Thursday of the month.

Contact Nola Sindel at [ashnol@skymesh.com.au](mailto:ashnol@skymesh.com.au) for details.

### Tamborine Mountain Botanical Art Group

Allied to Tamborine Mountain Creative Arts Inc., this group meets for three-hour sessions twice a month. Contact Cassandra Hodgins at [quiessence@bigpond.com](mailto:quiessence@bigpond.com) or Helen Lynch at [gerry\\_helen@bigpond.com](mailto:gerry_helen@bigpond.com).

### The Artists – Botanic Garden Tanawha

Meets at Maroochy Bushland Botanic Gardens, Tanawha; workshops available.

Contact Nita Lester at [nita.c.lester@gmail.com](mailto:nita.c.lester@gmail.com) for details.

## Botanical eye

If, like me, you like to photograph plants during your walks, you will end up with quite a collection. Can you guess what they are?



\* If you know of any other regional groups, please let us know and we will feature details in the next newsletter.

Answer: don't ask me, I have no idea!

# Notice board

## Upcoming BASQ events

Mark your calendars now. Garden and Momentum Days start at 9.30 am. For more details, contact **Kay Sullivan**, [secretary@botanicalartqld.com.au]

**23 March:** introduction to botanic drawing, part 2

**24 March:** specimen selection workshop

**27 March:** Garden Day

**30 March:** introduction to botanic drawing, part 2

**14 April:** Momentum Day

**27–28 April:** painting Australian native orchids

**4 May:** introduction to botanic painting, part 1

**12 May:** Momentum Day

**18 May:** introduction to botanic painting, part 1

## Errata

In our February enews, it has been mentioned that Ray Steward was honoured with the Order of Australia Medal.

The AOM is issued by the Office of the Governor General of Australia (not the Society!).

There is a regulated nomination process by which community people/groups can nominate someone they think is worthy of the award.

There is one nominee and four referees to make the application.

Thank you to Kristin Bain for the correction.

## New members

Since our last newsletter we have welcomed the following new members to our Society: **Sharon Anderson, Belinda Bate, Diane Betts, Julianne Biffin, Lorraine Caldwell, Jennifer Cobbin, Tamara De Luchi, Karen Falvey, Shona Fisher, Tara Fitzsimmons, Sandra Ford, Glenda Gordon, Elizabeth Hobman, Carol Koser, Anne Lehmann, Serene Leow, Elisabeth Mawson, Alex Moore, Ruth Payne, Alison Philpott, Helen Placanica, Colin Price, Greg Rickard, Michelle Roberts, Inger Rowe, Elizabeth Sands, Andi Spark, Joanna Thomas, Julie-Anne Michelle Trundell, Annette van der Leij, Tess Vogts, Rita Walsh, Craig Waters, Patricia Wilcox, Catherine Young.**

A warm welcome to you all.

## To members

At our recent annual general meeting, a request has been made by current members to have access to our members contact list. An electronic version will be available via email for those requesting.

Members privacy will be respected according to their preferences on their membership and privacy laws.

**We now urgently need a new workshops coordinator**, as Louise Saunders has stepped down this year.

This position is essential to manage our courses and workshops which are our major service to new and present members.

## BASQ Facebook page

The most commented and liked posts on our Facebook page feature you and your artwork. Visit, friend, like and share at [facebook.com/botanicalartqld](https://facebook.com/botanicalartqld). Send your high-quality pictures (jpg format) to **Kath Kerswell** at [exhibition@botanicalartqld.com.au](mailto:exhibition@botanicalartqld.com.au)

## Websites

### Call to our members

We are going to transfer our current website to Wordpress,

for easier management access and compliance with the changing internet requirements.

Current artists featured on the site and new members wishing to add their work need to send high quality images for the new site. They should be at least 1200 pixels on the shorter side, at 300 dpi, best quality uncompressed jpg or png. Tiffs are acceptable, but they are large files. Contact Florence, newsletter editor, for alternative way to send files and information.

### Artists resource

An invaluable website for artists, mentioned in a previous enewsletter, is: [www.botanicalartandartists.com](http://www.botanicalartandartists.com)

This website is full of great information on botanical art history, artists past and present, and also some videos. Please put this website in your bookmarks, it is worth having a look from time to time.

## Margaret Flockton Award Exhibition 2019



The 16th annual Margaret Flockton Award Exhibition opens its doors on Saturday 30 March 2019, Maiden Theatre, Royal Botanic Garden Sydney.

Twenty-six scientific botanical illustrators from 17 countries competed this year. See the

Royal Botanic Garden Sydney's website for more information. [www.rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au](http://www.rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au)

## Other

### Guild of Natural Science Illustrators conference

Brisbane, University of Queensland, St Lucia campus 29 June–6 July 2019

Geoff Thompson is a collection imager at Queensland Museum with past experience as an entomological illustrator and current skills in printmaking and deep-focus photography.

He has been a long-time member of the US-based Guild of Natural Science Illustrators (GNSI) [gnsi.org](http://gnsi.org).

The guild counts many great botanical illustrators as members and hope to have many of them there for the conference.

## Community

### Native plants Queensland

The Western suburbs branch will hold their meeting on 2 April 2019 at Chapel Hill State School, under the resource centre. It will feature an illustrated talk on the fauna and flora of Kangaroo Island by Dr Ross McKenzie.

For more information contact Mary at: [kenmoregardenclubqld@gmail.com](mailto:kenmoregardenclubqld@gmail.com). New members and visitors are welcome.

### THECA

The Hut Environmental and Community Association is an organisation concerned with increasing the awareness, understanding and knowledge about our natural environment and wildlife.

It hosts speakers and produces a newsletter regularly.

For more information see their website: [www.theca.asn.com.au](http://www.theca.asn.com.au)

### HDGA

The Half Dozen Group of Artists is a community visual art group founded more than 75 years ago.

More information on: [www.hgd-artists.com](http://www.hgd-artists.com)