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Botanical Art

• QUEENSLAND •

Newsletter of the Botanical Artists' Society of Queensland Inc.

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Beetles drawn by Pauline Putland

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Sunshine Coast: science meets art

At the beginning of 2016, the Friends of the Maroochy Bushland Botanic Garden initiated an association between the Maroochy Botanic Garden and the Botanical Artists' Society of Queensland through the help of Professor **Nita C Lester**.

This association led to the establishment of a botanic art group, The Artists Botanic Gardens Tanawha, at the Maroochy Botanic Garden. This group meets monthly at the Garden for instruction and friendly help practising botanic art, and learning more about native plants.

The passion and engagement of this group is contagious, no matter the skill level of each participant – beginners to art teachers – and more than 20 participants are enrolled.

(continued on page 4)

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 quarterly newsletter will keep you informed of BASQ's current happenings. If you would like to contribute, please email sparkler@iinet.net.au by **15 June** for the Winter edition.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

AGM Report

My report this year will focus on the following elements: communication, showcasing, education, finances and our Society generally.

Communication is the key to a successful organisation. Through the newsletter, website, secretarial post and emails – as well as in person – the news of this organisation was disseminated. 2016 experienced high quality ‘conversations’.

Newsletter – feedback says it all: professional, informative. To Suzanne and all contributors, a thank you is extended.

Publicity – website, promotional material, facebook and news: all difficult tasks and yet at the same time rewarding. Lynda, Margaret, Anne and Florence have expanded our contacts, made new friends and endorsed practices – congratulations and thank you.

Secretarial – a role that is the glue of our organisation. Both Kay and Shipra continue to conduct their roles fully, and with great care and attention. When messages and minutes are received, spare a minute to appreciate their communication as time has been given most generously.

Administrative Assistant – the position has experienced many changes over the past year. Michelle decided to move on to other work. Many thanks are extended to Michelle for all the years given and for her expertise. Two community members offered and took up the position, one after the other, but after training and meetings both, for different

reasons, declined to go further. A third one is on board – Margaret Abbot. All progressing well to date. To Robyn, Jenny and Kristin thank you for all the additional hours given to all of these women. You all gave in excess of what was expected.

Showcasing is a common practice of any art organisation. Our displays at the Native Plant Show Mt Coot-tha and at our own Floressence are vital elements of our Society. Preparation for these begins back in our own minds as we develop and create our art works. We hand our works to other members for exhibition ... in the hope of sales. The art works labels this year were professional. To Kath, Marcelle, Linda P, Michelle R and Dorothy M, our thanks are extended as you lead our ‘showcases’. To all who offered time before, during and after the exhibitions, thank you. Without your support, our ‘shows’ could not go ahead.

2017 promises the return of the Rosewood Native Plant Display; hence, along with Mt Coot-tha and Floressence, all hands are needed on deck.

This brings me to the issue of merchandise. Research has been conducted with the question ‘how do other botanical and wildlife societies handle merchandise during exhibitions?’ Interesting data has been obtained. Some groups do not include merchandise, some extend an invitation to exhibiting artists only, some include all members but set limits, and others only allow members who assist with the sale of the goods. A wide variety of processes but they all ring bells – merchandise can be an issue and IS an issue. Our Society must solve the current state, so please expect discussions in the near future to determine a new approach for 2017.

Education is part of our future. The courses under Margaret’s care continue to speak for themselves – again double numbers and the display at Floressence stopped many of us,

encouraging reflection about our own art. 2016 workshop tutors offered inspiration and personal growth. To all members who tutored, your contributions were gratefully received. Thank you to Kristin, our acting workshop coordinator. I urge someone to take on this role during 2017 or there will be no workshops.

“To all members who have supported their fellow members and our Society, I extend sincere thanks.”

One workshop was conducted on the Sunshine Coast, while grants were awarded to regional groups to bring expertise closer to home hence enacting our name ‘Queensland’. More applications for regional support are in the wind.

The demonstrations were popular at Floressence 2016, while the new pop-up workshop concept generated much interest. At times three pop-ups were running at once. In addition, we experimented with ‘exhibition tours’ on the Sunday. Three were conducted. New members, an art work sale, and lots of smiles resulted. Thank you to all members who kindly shared their knowledge, time and expertise.

Further, our Society offers Momentum and Garden Days, which are an additional means of furthering the education of our members and possibly attracting new ones. To all members who ‘made’ these days successful, thanks are extended. I know I am missing out as I am unable to attend Sundays and Mondays – do not let this happen to you, join if you can.

Finances have been held with care and attention. Many new elements have increased the work for Jenny, our treasurer, but she has always researched with detail and made honest and focused suggestions. Thank you, Jenny. Robyn Graham as assistant treasurer for three months handled a number

of tasks over and beyond expectations. Thank you, Robyn.

The Society is in a ‘good place’ financially. It is the members’ responsibility to use the funds wisely and ensure all members are supported equally. For example, during 2016 we organised storage of our

possessions instead of holding them in private homes, ran workshops at a loss to ensure our members were serviced, supported regional groups, purchased small LED lights for workshops, and the merchandise at Floressence was free of commission.

Overall our Society is ‘looking good’ with enthusiastic members, a committed management committee, and highly skilled tutors. Floressence 2017 will be a shorter length. Demonstrations, pop-up workshops and exhibition tours are planned.

To all members who have supported their fellow members and our Society, I extend sincere thanks. To all members who had held positions during 2016 but are not continuing, your contributions definitely contributed to the success of 2016. To all members who held positions during 2016 and who are continuing, thank you. I look forward to working alongside you over the next 12 months.

I have been informed that some of our members who are continuing on the management committee during 2017 do not plan to nominate in 2018. Please seriously consider standing this year so the change-over will be smooth.

I conclude my report. ■

Artist Profile – Minjung Oh

Banksia menziesii



Banksia robur and possum



Lechenaultia

I was born and educated in Seoul, South Korea. My mother began teaching me piano from the age of four and, throughout my entire childhood, my goal was to become a musician. With this profound influence throughout my early years, I never thought I would pursue a career, or studies, in anything other than music. Fortunately, in my middle-school years, I attended an art-focused school in Korea, majoring in various arts including ballet, all kinds of music, and composing traditional Korean music etc. As well as this, I was fortunate enough to be exposed to all kinds of art on display by my fellow peers. To this day, I still remember walking down the school hallways, always gazing and being impressed by not just the quality of the artworks, but also the variety. Now that I am older, I wonder if my true desire and interest always lay in painting and drawing.

After getting married, I had two children and then moved to Australia in 2001. Years went by and in 2008 I joined a small art group with a few friends, where I began to realise my true passion and talent was for drawing. From then on, I practised continuously to find new ways to improve my skills. In 2010, I joined the Royal Queensland Art Society on the Gold Coast to take part in a course of life drawing.

As I learnt to paint and draw, I realised the close link between art and music. The similarity between the two is that the audience should be able to sense the artist's feelings and understand the stories through performances or art works. Both require great effort and time, and have become the driving force behind my admiration and passion.

I found that I really enjoyed drawing flowers and plants. I used to borrow art books from the library; the first book was called *Botanical Art*. This persuaded me

to learn more deeply about the subject, so eventually I came into contact with BASQ in 2014. From then, I took part in **Anne Hayes's** workshop, which further fuelled my ambition and passion.

By 2015, I had finished **Margaret Hastie's** drawing and painting course and other artists' workshops. After that, I was fortunate enough to join the St Catherine Art Group with **Lynda Young** and Gillian Rankin's art group. Learning art with other artists is a great joy and I am always thankful. The most important aspect I learnt was their positive attitude towards, and love of, the environment and its plants and flowers.

In 2016, I took part in the BASA Flora Exhibition at Palm House in Sydney. And by joining the Korea Botanic Arts Cooperative in 2016, I was able to participate in their exhibitions and learn about my home country's experiences.

As I explore botanic art, I learn more about so many great Australian plants and native species. When painting, I'm always thankful I can appreciate the beauty of even the smallest flower species, and to be able to paint or express them in my own way. No matter how much I observe or examine it, I never grow tired of Nature. I always try to express Nature's beauty even more beautifully. That is why I want to keep learning botanic art and is the reason I like to continue to improve my drawing and painting. ■



REGIONAL ROUND-UP

Science meets art (continued)

One of the functions of the Maroochy Regional Bushland Botanic Garden is to identify and keep a record of endemic plants within the Sunshine Coast area. It also functions to educate and promote public awareness about conservation of this native flora and fauna. One method to accomplish this is to encourage a relationship between the garden environment and the arts.

Botanical illustration and art makes science attractive. In botanical illustrations, the emphasis is on the scientific record and botanical accuracy to enable identification of a plant species. Records might also be made of the plant growing in its natural habitat. In botanical art, the emphasis is on the plant or flower without the requirement for the information required by a botanist. There's more of an emphasis on the aesthetic value to be found in the plant or flower, and the plant depicted must still be identifiable to species level, and be a scientifically accurate representation of the subject.

The Sunshine Coast region is experiencing an increased awareness of the endemic plant species, art and science. Participants all work together, all sharing knowledge.

2016 Wednesdays involved focused instruction along with botany, interwoven under the able instruction of Nita, along with regular support by **Robyn Graham**. 2017 days have been divided into two presentations: morning art and afternoon botany. Some participants attend both sessions while others select.

The 2016 artists are holding an exhibition *Beautiful Botanics* at the Maroochy Bushland Botanic Garden 22–28 March. Opening night 24th: everyone welcome. This is the first exhibition for the participants: be amazed, the works are outstanding. ■



Sharing works by Beverley Souter (above) and Paul Horne (below)



Anyone interested in trying or practising botanic art is most welcome to join the Group. Check out the Friends webpage or speak to anyone already in the Group. It is suggested that you become a member of either the Garden or the Botanical Artists' Society of Queensland.



combined authorship of Tanawha group members



Tablelands to Downs

Our small group of botanic artists, Jacqui Bydder, Barbara Diery, Jac Pommer, Suzanne Ridley and Nola Sindel, is located in the borderland area between the Northern Tablelands of NSW and the Downs area of Queensland.

We meet regularly each month for a sharing/working/communicating get-together. February's meeting was held in the Stanthorpe Art Gallery – a very inspiring location with great support from the gallery's staff.

In addition to meeting and sharing expertise, our group is planning several major activities this year.

- A **coloured-pencil workshop** at the end of March with talented tutor, Rebecca Berrett. An artist who works in watercolour, coloured pencil, acrylics, and pen and ink, Rebecca trained as a scientific illustrator. She is also a book-binder whose artworks are widely admired. The workshop will be held at Warwick Art Gallery.

by Nola Sindel



Pictured above, from left: Barbara Diery, Jacqui Bydder and Nola Sindel

- A **Botanic Art Exhibition** *Botanic Expressions* will be held at Stanthorpe Gallery opening 5 May and extending for six weeks. More than 20 works will be displayed in the cabinets and will highlight the differing styles and talents of the group. ■

See what Margaret Saul (pictured here) – now living in Italy – has to say about the creative process on page 8...



Exhibition: Botanical art in colour

The inaugural Maroochydore Library Artspace exhibition launch – in association with Caloundra Regional Gallery and Sunshine Coast Libraries

3 April - 13 May 2017 at Maroochydore Library, 44 Sixth Avenue, Cotton Tree: <https://gallery.sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au/Exhibitions/Botanical-Art-in-Colour>

- A joint exhibition of Sunshine Coast BASQ artists **Beryl Robertson** and **Susan Hadenham** that celebrates their passion for beautiful and unusual plants and flowers. Each subject is rendered with a high level of detail and accuracy and viewers will be able to appreciate the colours, shapes and special qualities of the individual works.

(Right: *Waratah Telopea* by Susan Hadenham)



BOOK REVIEW

Margaret Flockton: a fragrant memory book review

Margaret Flockton: a fragrant memory written by Louise Wilson; published by Wakefield Press, 2016

The contribution to Australian Botanical Art made by Margaret Flockton (1861–1953) is for the first time acknowledged and recognised in this biography, written by Louise Wilson, a great-niece, who remembers her as Aunt Mog.

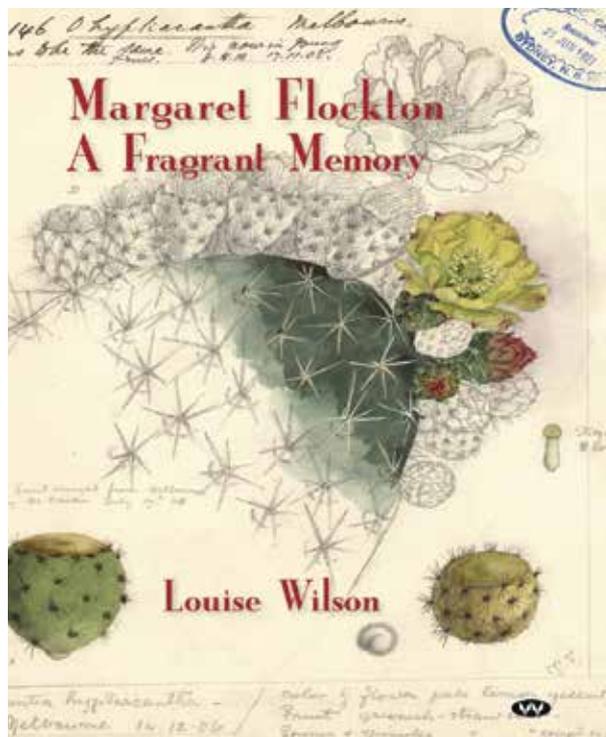
This biography would not have been written without the impetus given by the work of the Illustrators at the Herbarium at the Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney (RBGS), Catherine Wardrop and Lesley Elkan. Early this century they began working through the Herbarium's holdings and found over 1000 accurately detailed but also beautiful works of Botanical Illustration, all signed M Flockton. On International Women's Day in 2003 their discoveries publicised the outstanding quality of these artworks and provided the impetus for the establishment of the Margaret Flockton Award, by the Friends of the Garden, and for this biography.

On reading the biography – finally published last year

by Zahra Maarten

– I was enthralled. The lavish illustrations relate well to the text and maintain the interest throughout. My immediate interest, as a botanical artist, was Margaret Flockton's working life.

She graduated from the National Art School at South Kensington, London, in 1888, with additional training in lithography. Emigrating to Australia with her family later that year, she established her own studio in Sydney, giving classes as well as working on her own paintings, including groupings of native flowers. The paintings she entered in the Art Society of New South Wales's exhibitions sold well and had good reviews, and her lithography skills led to commercial commissions, such as The American Tobacco Company's for images of native flowers to be posters, sold as sets of four, which were a sell out.



Then in 1901 Joseph Maiden, Director of the RBGS, offered her the position of Illustrator at the Herbarium. Maiden had major goals for his

scientific work, including *A critical revision of the genus Eucalyptus* and *The forest flora of New South Wales*, but to fulfil these goals he needed an artist who met certain criteria – and that artist was Margaret Flockton. Thus began nearly a quarter of a century of close cooperation between scientist and artist, Maiden acknowledging the outstanding quality of her work by saying:

“She is practically a joint author the faithfulness of her drawing sometimes brought out a hitherto unsuspected point.”

(*Margaret Flockton: a fragrant memory*, p. 153)

Maiden died in 1925, but Margaret Flockton had already stayed beyond her actual retirement date and continued at the Herbarium until 1927 to complete work that was in progress.

The Flockton family's antecedents form the first part of the book and the family's Australian experiences come later. Although Margaret herself never married, she was clearly the focal point of the family network, supporting herself financially, and others too, as well

as having affectionate and loving companionship with parents, sisters and their descendants.

This is the story of a remarkable woman – I thoroughly recommend it. ■

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NOTICE BOARD

New members

Since the last newsletter we have welcomed the following new members to our Society: **Christine Zupanc, Cathryn Coutts, Helen Byrne, Michelle Nash, Eike Marshman, Diane Smith, Simon Murray, Annette Sargent-Turner, Alicia Lamburd, Maija Bloomer, Nicole Stehn, Amanda Maggs, Sarah Christodoulou, Charlotte Hall, Marie Doraisamy, Alexa Inwood, Susan Wilson, Maria Castaneda, Narelle Sutton, Ashley Perkins, Catherine**

Hall, Leah Hattendorff, Maria Kostyanaya, Laretta White, John Atkinson and Dammi Seneviratne. A warm welcome to you all.

New postal address

Please note that BASQ has moved its postal address from PO Box 9269, Wynnum Plaza 4178 to 22 Anthony Court, Deception Bay Q 4508.

New video

A video about Floressence has been created by Graham Young (**Lynda Young's** son) showing off the skills and talents of our members: check it out: [youtube.com/watch?v=tC2rU-hs3i8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tC2rU-hs3i8) or see our Facebook page or website now: it's worth a look!

Ellis Rowan: *flower painter, naturalist and adventurer*

18 March - 23 May 2017 at Ipswich Art Gallery, d'Arcy Doyle Place, Ipswich: ipswichartgallery.qld.gov.au

• *An emancipated woman ahead of her time, Ellis Rowan turned what fellow Australian artists deemed the 'genteel' female pastime of flower painting into a successful and prolific 50 year-career in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, as she regularly ventured into remote parts of Australia to record unspoilt and botanically unexplored native flora and fauna.*



BASQ fees

Membership fees for 2017 are now well overdue. From next year, an 'earlybird' system will apply.

BASQ Dates

Mark your calendars now. Next year's annual general meeting will be held on the first Sunday of March. This year's Floressence will be held from Thursday 15 to Tuesday 20 November.

Garden Day

Don't forget Specimen Day every third Monday of the month at the Brisbane Botanic Gardens Mt Coot-tha.

Brisbane Botanic Gardens parking

Parking at Mt Coot-tha has changed (see map at left).

Brookfield Art Show

To be held from 19–21 May 2017 at the Brookfield Showgrounds, this event features a comprehensive art exhibition and award, open to all. For more details, see brookfieldshowground.com.au/show-competitions/art

Botanical Bazaar, Gold Coast Gardening Expo

Sunday September 2017, Country Paradise Parklands, Nerang, will be a fully interactive event that aims to educate and inspire all

ages of nature lovers. See: botanicalbazaar.com.au/

Sherwood Arboretum

If anyone is interested in painting any plants to be put on display for the Sherwood Arboretum, please contact Dorothy Muller at rd.muller@bigpond.com for details.

Rare plants group

If you would like to help create this new group, please contact **Zahra Maarten** at zmsbotanicals@bigpond.com.

Banks and Solander

If you would like to become part of a small committee to formulate a response to Banks and Solander 2020, please contact **Nita C Lester** on nita.c.lester@gmail.com.

Wildlife and Botanical Artists Inc (WABA)

Check out this website bringing artists, scientists and environmentalists together to promote appreciation of our natural wildlife and botanical heritage: waba.net.au.

Bowral District Art Society (BDAS)

Travelling to Bowral, NSW? Why not visit the Bowral Gallery, where BASQ member **Cathryn Coutts** runs a Botanical Artists' group. See: bit.ly/2n7Mhup for more information. ■



A 4-STAGE CREATIVE PROCESS

Knowing where you are – and how to progress: Margaret Saul, who operated her own school of botanic art and illustration at Brisbane Botanic Gardens–Mt Coot-tha, shows us how to recognise well-defined stages with practical applications that you can tailor to suit your needs and successfully glide through your own creative art process.

Stage 1: OBSERVING

Explore, discover, research – deepens knowledge and understanding of your subject and sees you increasingly energised and inspired.

Collection and Storage

- Keep plant material fresh (consider treatment of cut stalks of specific plants); collection permit for protected species.
- Sketching in the field – make a list of outdoor sketching gear and keep handy in bag or backpack.

Observational Studies

- Plant ID – field guides; plant keys; botanical descriptions – use online resources.
- Set up – arrange subject matter for optimum viewpoint/eyelevel; utilise your white and dark backdrops for clarity.
- Field sketch pages – drawings + L&S studies/notes of complex plant structures; colour observations; your photographs/notes.

Stage 2: COMPOSING

A picture's foundational framework

- Identify the main focal point and develop the framework to support it.
- Format (portrait or landscape); brainstorm with 'thumbnails', based on selected field sketch material, the viewpoints of which may have been influenced by your initial compositional ideas.
- Make successive tracing paper overlays of a preferred 'thumbnail' at actual picture dimension.
- Analyse final choice of composition – taped to an uncluttered wall and at the optimal viewing level.

Tonal Composition: the broad arrangement of values + range of contrast (the picture's tonal key)

- Not to be confused with 'light and shade', i.e. light fall across surfaces, the critical observational rendering that optimises clarity.
- Enhance the main focal point – major value contrast.
 - Consider enhancing a sense of expression or place, through choice of a tonal key. Start with selection of background tone – white or black, light or dark (colour). Consider flower symbolism/ folklore or habitat, e.g. damp/dark or dry/sunny.
 - Enhance sense of 3-D overall – creative juxtaposition of values (minimum or maximum value contrast) within reality.
 - Analyse final choice of tonal composition – taped to that uncluttered wall.

Stage 3: TRANSFERRING AND TRANSPOSING

Transferring the detailed Structural Composition

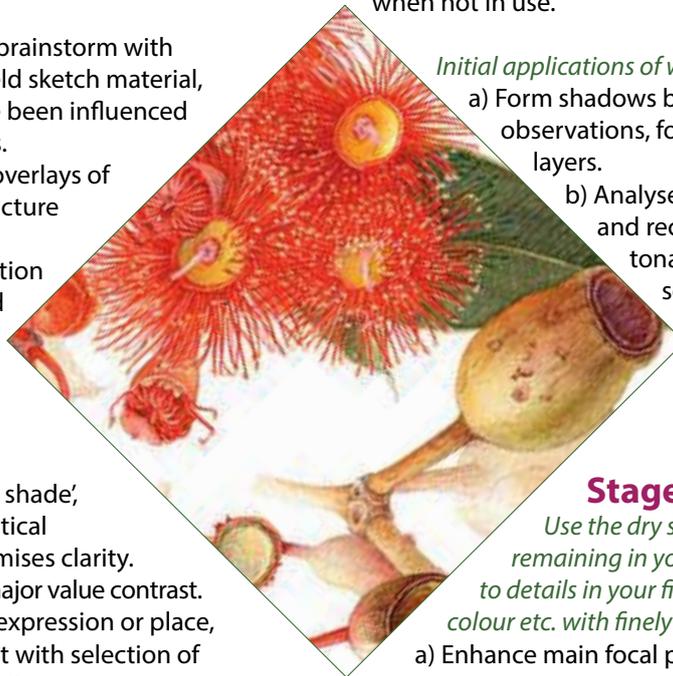
- Continually refer to your original drawings and observational notes.
- While tracing outlines, stay alert to the third dimension (subtle changes/ intersections in surface planes and edges).
- An accurate ink line drawing on tracing vellum ensures no second guessing of detail but also, black line accommodates tracing onto heavy weight watercolour paper while using a lightbox (in a darkened room).
- Accurately define the lightly traced pencil line on the watercolour paper using a fine pointed pencil (medium grade).
- 'Lift' excess graphite with cleaned kneaded eraser – prior to colour applications.

Transposing the Tonal Composition into colour

- Prep/test color mixes in accordance with values in the Tonal Composition and in sync with your chosen background colour(s).
- Allow half a day to complete three separate palettes (small ceramic 'flower palettes') with full wells of prepared colour (i) leaf mixes, (ii) flower mixes, (iii) brown and grey mixes, sufficient to complete the entire painting. Seal with plastic film when not in use.

Initial applications of wet-on-wet watercolour wash

- Form shadows based on light and shade observations, followed by general overall wash layers.
- Analyse colour development-in-progress and reconcile where necessary with the tonal composition. **NOTE:** This stage seldom sees satisfaction with the direction of the painting but it will be transformed during the next stage!



Stage 4: DETAILING

Use the dry spreads of your colour mixes remaining in your three palettes – constantly refer to details in your field sketch material while enhancing colour etc. with finely pointed brushwork

- Enhance main focal point – develop detail, definition, value contrast and colour intensity – all in sync with reality
- Analysis – view the painting in progress in daylight (not direct sunlight) – ideally in a vertical position.
- Enhance colour unity, within the realms of reality.
- Analyse picture.
- Store painting away safely, allowing at least a week to pass so as to make a more objective analysis. ■

NOTE FROM MARGARET: The result of formalising my own creative process led me to define a designated sequence of instruction for the Brookside Gardens School of Botanical Art (USA) the year prior to its opening in 2004. Formatting it as a teaching handout with added practical pointers proved a useful guide for the school's advanced level students. For more information, see botanicartist.com.