



flora

the
Art &
Science
of the
Plant
Perth
2023



Flora Perth 2023

For the first time in its exhibition history, the Botanical Art Society of Australia (BASA) is gracing the walls of a Western Australian Art gallery with the exhibition *Flora: the Art and Science of the Plant, Perth 2023*. This exhibition features artworks by members of BASA and the Japanese Association of Botanical Illustration (JABI), displayed alongside works by local Western Australian botanical artists and works from the Janet Holmes á Court Collection. Uniting these four groups is an understanding that the botanical realm abounds with treasures that not only serve unique and integral functions within the natural environment, but also endear themselves to those who admire them. Each artist's passion and dedication is evident in the intricate works on display, each so carefully and skillfully constructed that they appear to be an act of nurture. Carefully chosen colors and fine brush or pencil strokes convey an intimacy that can only emerge from meticulous observation and respect for their subject matter.

Prized for its accuracy and extreme attention to detail, botanical illustration fittingly remains an essential tool for scientists to identify and catalogue flora for herbariums around the world. Often found in journal articles, botanical artworks focus on the minutia of a plant, using laborious details to offer insight into a specific section rather than conveying an entire plant. Many of today's botanical artworks are painted in watercolour, a medium which highlights the delicate, sometimes translucent, nature of plant features, like petals. Many artists, however, use a range of media including coloured pencils, graphite, pen and ink, acrylic, scraper board and oil paint to achieve the different effects necessary to capture each diverse botanical subject. Artists typically use fine brushes and extremely sharp pencils to obtain the detail and accuracy required, often working from live plants and using magnifying lenses. With larger works requiring hundreds of hours to complete, botanical illustration is the product of planning, a steady hand and astute, dedicated observation.



Anna Voytsekhovich, *Glossodia Major*

Historically, botanical illustrations have served an integral role in the study of medicine. As techniques and refinement of botanical illustration improved, the study of medicinal herbs became more scientific as the illustrations provided a valuable resource to identify, classify and describe species. This type of artwork grew extensively during the Age of Discovery (mid 15th-mid 16th century), as new plants were encountered and described by explorers and their botanists. As the reach of these explorers, scientists and adventurers grew, so did their influence on botanical art around the world. Consequently, botanical illustrations came to be valued for their beauty as well as their scientific function. They began to be recognised for their strength as art objects, subjects worthy of display on a wall.



Ellen Hickmann, *Bottlebrush, Callistemon glaucus*

The Japanese Association of Botanical Illustration

The JABI is a nationwide organisation of lovers of botanical illustration with around 330 members. JABI was founded in 1991 for the purpose of popularising and expanding botanical illustration. JABI publish regular newsletters, an annual bulletin, postcards, catalogues and organise an annual study trip for its members.

Apart from their annual exhibition, JABI have organised two major exhibitions and publications: *Endangered Plants of Japan: A Florilegium, 2004*. This exhibition travelled throughout Japan and to the USA, and *Drawings of Alien Plants in Japan: a Collection, 2009*. JABI members are currently working on their third project: *Endemic Plants of Japan*. This is the first time that JABI are exhibiting as a group in Australia.



Midori Nagasaka, *Florist's Chrysanthemum, morifolium cv.*

The Botanical Art Society of Australia

BASA is a not-for-profit organisation representing artists in all states of Australia. The organisation was formed in 1999 and now has a membership of over 500 botanical artists. BASA aims to foster and promote the development of botanical art nationwide and to bring together people who have a love of plants and of the botanical art form.

Members receive a Newsletter, regular exhibitions around Australia, online workshops, grants for botanical art projects and an online sales site. BASA are also the Australian representatives in the *Worldwide Botanical Art Exhibition*, the next being held in May 2025.

West Australian Artists

There has been a long history of Western Australian artists depicting the unique flora in their backyard. These include Georgiana Leake, Ellis Rowan, Margaret Forrest, Edgar Dell and Emily Pelloe. In 1991 the Art Gallery of Western Australia organised a botanical art exhibition, *Wildflowers in Art*. This led to a group being organised, known as BAGs or the Botanical Artists Group, Western Australia, with seven regular members: Pat Dundas, Rica Erickson, Ellen Hickman, Penny Leech, Margaret Pieroni, Katrina Syme and Philippa Nikulinsky. While this group no longer operates, there are many botanical artists around Western Australia, working individually or as members of BASA, the Wildflower Society of Western Australia or the Watercolour Society of Western Australia.

The Janet Holmes à Court Collection

The Janet Holmes à Court Collection has a large collection of historical and contemporary botanical artworks from artists including Marion Ellis Rowan, Margaret Preston, May Creeth, Annie Dorington, Clifton Pugh, Sujora Conrad, Helen Seiver and Eva Fernandez. Botanical Art and illustration has been a consistent collection focus and it has featured in many exhibitions including: *Representing Differents* at the Parliament House of Western Australia (2023), *The Botanical: Beauty and Peril* at the Art Gallery of WA (2019), *Wildflower Bouquets* at Vasse Felix (2011), *Kings Park Visions* (2005), *Floribunda* (2004) and *Banks' Florilegium* (2003). In the spirit of such ongoing interest, we are delighted to welcome *Flora: the Art and Science of the Plant* to the Holmes à Court Gallery @ no.10.

Art Prizes

- Madeleine Taylor Award for Best in Show, \$2000 with \$1000 to be shared by Honourable Mentions. This is provided by BASA and available to BASA members.
- Leech Partington Prize for Best in Show, \$1000. This is available to WA artists depicting a Western Australian native plant.*
- Leech Partington People's Choice Prize, \$250. This is awarded to the most popular artwork depicting a Western Australian plant as voted by the public.*

*Sponsored by Jennie Partington in memory of her late partner and botanical artist, Penny Leech.



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Ngala kaaditj Noongar moort keyen kaadak nidja boodja.

*We acknowledge the Noongar people as the
original custodians of this land.*

Front Cover: Keiko Soga, *Green Pak Choi, Brassica rapa Chinensis Group*
Inner Sleeve: Belinda Biggs, *Dahlia, 'Islander'*

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