



BSBA Newsletter, April 2025



A few words from Jan Robertson, our Chair:

At last, after what seems to have been a long, dreary winter, spring is here, the clocks have changed and I hope you are feeling inspired to get painting or at least to get outside to enjoy the trees and other plants coming to life.

We were very sad to lose dear Audrey Child in February. She had been a BSBA member for many years and was always very supportive of all we did. We will miss her.

For those taking part in the Bowood project, we hope to arrange a group visit there several times during their open season so there will be plenty of opportunity to choose plants to

paint for the exhibition taking place next year. It is also a lovely place to visit for a day out with the four-acre walled garden now open to the general public for the first time. The primroses have been wonderful this year and we are told there are fewer slugs because it has been a colder and drier winter than it was last year. No two years are the same! Enjoy the sunshine when you can.
Jan

(The painting of *Meconopsis*, above, is by Audrey Child, Janet)

This issue of the BSBA Newsletter is dealing mainly with reviews of books and courses relating to botanical art along with some exhibition reviews from members. However first a few words about the BSBA Website:

Our website at www.bsba.co.uk serves as a showcase to promote the group to audiences near and far. Since its revamp some 5 years ago it has had over 17,000 hits: people are looking at us!

We try to keep the Members page up to date with the most recent newsletter, diary and updates on view. Also, leading up to BSBA's next exhibition at Bowood House you will find a list of the plants that some members have chosen to paint for the exhibition. Please let me know when you choose your plants so that they can be added to the list to avoid duplication by members.

By clicking on the blue highlighted names on the members' gallery pages you will be taken to the member's personal pages many of which give more information about the individual artist. If you wish to add to your page, change your painting or add a link to your website please get in touch with me at janet.collett@icloud.com

Thank you, Janet

From Rachel:

A visit to the Shirley Sherwood Gallery

I always like to go to Kew with my mother when I'm staying with her, if the weather is kind. We were lucky in mid-January to have a day with sun and bright blue sky and no wind. I had looked to see what was on at the Shirley Sherwood gallery and read there was an exhibition of paintings of blue flowers – a colour relatively rare for flowers. What I missed noticing was that the main exhibition, *Expressions in Blue*, was not of paintings, but of monumental porcelain vases, by Felicity Aylieff. Seeing the three giant pots outside the gallery, we were not sure this was going to be our kind of art. However, once in the gallery, we were fascinated and very impressed by her work. The exhibition showed not just the pots – most in blue, but some using many colours – but exactly how they are made. The artist has spent much time in the last ten years in a city in China famous for its porcelain, and she has got to know some of the makers. To create the pots needs three or four strong men to work the clay as it spins on a huge potter's wheel. The kiln is enormous. The largest pots consist of two or three parts, fitted on top of each other. There is a detailed description of how Felicity

decorates them, and the stages of firing. You can see from the attached photo how, though the glaze is all of cobalt, she uses different techniques to apply it – including huge brushes – and in different strengths of colour. In one of the photos you can see behind a photo of her applying the glaze.

Until I watched a film narrated by her, I wasn't sure what this exhibition was doing in a gallery devoted to botanical art. However, Felicity explained how she was inspired by plants, and had spent a long time in the Kew library looking at drawings on the form of plants, and these were the basis certainly of the design of her coloured pots. The scale of the pieces is awe-inspiring. We couldn't help wondering how on earth they had been transported safely from China to Kew, and at what cost!

In the adjoining gallery was the rather small display of a few paintings of blue and mauve plants. Further on, I was very pleased to see a painting by Julia of an orange tulip (as I recall) on a black background.)

The exhibition finishes on March 23rd – maybe after you read this.



From Curzon Tussaud: A review of the Mary Delany exhibition at No 1 Royal Crescent, Bath

Mary Delaney's life more or less spans the 18c; in her childhood her father was at Court in London, but this position ended with the arrival of the first Hanoverian king, and the Granville family retreated to the home of Mary's uncle at Longleat, where Mary was married to her first husband Alexander Pendarves, a West Country MP considerably older than his bride. After being widowed, Mary went to live in Dublin, where there was a subsidiary English Court for which she embroidered Court dress for herself; many flowers and plants sewn on a black silk ground which granted her embroidery a drama which paler colours would not have done. Here she met her future husband Patrick Delany, although her family

would not permit their marriage for some years. Mary was skilled in many fields, gardening, painting, shellwork (rocaille) and she created a beautiful home for herself and Dean Delany.

Following the Dean's death, Mary returned to London and settled in St James's Square, but she spent months at a time as companion to the Duchess of Portland at Bulstrode Park, and it was here that the major artistic impetus of Mary's life began ... by accident. Seeing some fallen petals from a red geranium, Mary cut some extra petals from red paper and left them on the table beneath the plant. When the Duchess saw these, she was unable to distinguish them from real petals, and from this chance occurrence Mary began creating her "paper mosaics", numbering nearly 1,000 before failing eyesight stopped this endeavour. At Bulstrode, the Duchess was visited by Sir Joseph Banks, Ehret, Solander and other eminent botanists and naturalists, who began to provide Mary with subjects for her growing collection of flower collages. One day the King and Queen drove from Windsor to see Mary's work, and a friendship developed which eventually led, after the Duchess's death, to Mary being offered grace and favour accommodation at Windsor and invitations to spend time with the Royal family and to attend services at St George's Chapel.

The British Museum holds the vast majority of Mary's flower mosaics, where it is possible to see them by appointment in the Department of Prints and Drawings. There are also some in the Royal Collection at Windsor. Recently a loan exhibition has displayed some of her works at Beningbrough Hall; the exhibition in Bath is showing a small number of reproduction prints only, alongside contemporary collages by Georgie Hopton.



The rooms in which the works hang are difficult to photograph in effectively, but I wanted to show this one as it displays Mary's superb cutting skills although I couldn't avoid my own reflection in the glass.

Below are some items which may be of interest from discussions at the lunchtime mini-workshops held on the first Thursday of the month at St Andrew's. These workshops are a way for members to get together, enjoy a lunch and they also serve to raise much needed funds for the group.

The May workshop continues the theme of the structure of flowers focusing on the Ranunculaceae family. This is one of the largest of plant families including Anemone,

Aquilegia, Clematis and many more. *RHS The Garden*, February 2025, includes an article by James Armitage with particular reference to the structure of Hellebores which you may wish to refer to. (Thank you Annabel for this)

From Lyn:

Some information on Botanical Art Courses that members discussed following our Mini Workshop on 6 March:

www.field-studies-council.org/courses-and-experiences

The Field Studies Council has various properties around the country, the nearest being in Devon. You can study Botanical Drawing and Painting with Dawn Wright 21-25 July at Slapton Ley, Kingsbridge, Devon. Also various other courses at their centre at Flatford Mill in Suffolk including one using Ink with coloured pencil and a day on Understanding Flowers for Aspiring Botanists in July.

www.westdean.ac.uk

West Dean near Chichester, Sussex has a wide variety of courses throughout the year, some run by the following botanical artists: Ann Swan, Deborah Lambkin, Mariella Baldwin, Sheryl Elaine Pape, Sandrine Maugy and Liz Shippam.

www.cam.ac.uk

Courses at Cambridge University Botanical Gardens include the following; Watercolours: Illustrating Tulips in April, Spring Leaves in May, Meadow Flowers in July and Fruits, Berries and Seedheads in Sept. Coloured pencil courses include one for beginners in October and a second one online, covering Rosa Mundi, later in November.

www.wernogwood.co.uk/botanicaldrawing

Sara Simblet is running a course at Warnog Wood, Near Ruthin, North Wales, called Drawing from Nature (10th to the 13th of July).

www.aliwalsingham.com/oxfordsocietyofbotanicalart

Alli Walsingham in Oxfordshire offers two and four day courses plus other by invited tutors such as Billy Showell, Lucy T Smith and Mary Dillon.

www.ntu.ac.uk

Nottingham Trent University runs a botanical drawing and illustration for beginners run by Dawn Wright on five Saturdays, 3rd May to the 14th July or one week full time (14th to 18th July).

Nearer to home:

www.natureinart.co.uk

Nature in art, just north of Gloucester, runs various courses including a watercolour and gouache botanical illustration course run by Simon Williams 15th and 16th of July. They also run one entitled 'Botanical Linocut'.

www.hants.gov.uk/thingstodo/hilliergardens/whatson

At Harold Hillier gardens, Hampshire, there is a course on rhododendrons and also a Plant Habitat and Picture Composition course run by Karen Coulson, both in coloured pencil. There is also a Nature Journaling course in May and in June.

<https://botanic-garden.bristol.ac.uk/event>

At Bristol Botanic Gardens a four-day course called 'Traditional Botanical Painting' with tutor Jenny Brooks is being run over 4 Sundays from the 14th of April.

www.jobeal.net

Jo Beal runs Art Journalling courses in Stroud, or online, with the emphasis on your sketch book.

www.annswan.co.uk

Ann Swan lives in Rowde, Wilts and specialises in coloured pencil. She offers online tuition but no longer teaches at her home. She teaches at various residential courses at West Dean and Dedham Hall as well as some in Spain and France.

From Valerie Mead:

Books reviewed at the March Lunchtime Workshop 2025

- *The Concise British Flora in Colour* by Revd. Keble Martin. It took him years to create this collection, working only in his holidays. He would leave a space on a page until he found the right leaf or flower (*published in the '60's & what inspired my interest in BA*)
- *Botanical Art Techniques* – American Society of Botanical Artists
- *An Approach to Botanical Painting in Watercolour* – Anne-Marie & Donn Evans.
- *The Country Diary of an Edwardian Lady* – Edith Holden
- *The Kindly Fruit* – 3 Italian painters, notable for the way in which they painted fruits, often arranged to form faces
- *Botanical Illustration in Watercolour* – Eleanor Wunderlich
- *How to Draw Plants* – Keith West
- *The Botanical Garden Vol. I & II* – Martin Rix & Roger Philips (*a reference book*)
- *Kurt Jackson's Botanical Landscape* – Cornwall based artist

Some suggestions from the workshop to follow up:

- Make a sketch book of different colored and types of paper (deckle edged). Think about what different papers add to the work.
- Recycle brown paper and use a white pencil or paper to sketch
- Make an "accordion" sketch book (*ask Angie – she's made one*)
- Natasha Clutterbuck is a botanical artist working at Yeo Valley near Blagdon, Somerset. She runs some art courses there see: www.yeovalley.co.uk for further details
- Put a puddle of color in the corner of a blank sheet of paper. Do a "proper" drawing on the paper and then turn the dry puddle into an autumn leaf.

- *Botanic Illustration Classes at Painswick, Gloucestershire – Hawkwood (Jo Beale)* email: info@botanic-illustration.com for details
- *Simon Williams* offers a wide range of courses both online and at various locations around the country see www.swillustrations.com for details
- www.kingshillhouse.org.uk
- www.botanicalpaintersatbrackenwood.org.uk

On 14 march, a workshop was held at St. Andrew's with Sarah Morrish on the subject of illustrating moths, here are two reports from members who attended:
(Apologies for any duplication)

From Celia:

Workshops given by Sarah Morrish are always enjoyable, informative and introduce a subject which may be new to us. 'Illustrating Moths in Ink & Watercolour' on 14 March was no exception. We learned that there are over 2,500 species of moth in the UK, they are not all drab brown but can be very colourful and they play essential roles within ecosystems. Further information, and illustrations, were provided in a handout we were given. Sarah first took us through the drawing process by drawing a straight vertical line, using a ruler, so we only needed to draw half of the moth's central point of the head, thorax, abdomen, wings and antennae. Patterns on the wings were then added and the drawing traced onto tracing paper using an H or F pencil. It was then transferred onto hot press watercolour paper. Given the time restraints some of us decided to illustrate half a moth, but by flipping the tracing over the image of a whole insect could be achieved. Using fine-line pens we were then shown mark making techniques, mostly stippling, to illustrate the parts of the moth, patterns on the wings and texture; the thorax and abdomen on some insects being very furry. Recommended pens were Pigma micron in sizes 003, 005 and 01 or UNIPIN pens.

We were able to choose a taxidermy specimen to draw or, if we preferred, to copy an enlarged photo image. Sheets of our chosen specimen were supplied with photos of the larva, pupa, ovum and moth. Drawing the Spurge Hawkmoth I selected kept me occupied for some time. Sarah then demonstrated painting the moths with transparent watercolours. By the time we had applied paint to our work, the afternoon rapidly drew to a close and it was time to hand back the beautiful specimens Sarah had supplied.

And from Lyn, with a photograph of Sarah demonstrating:

One of many useful tips given to us during the Hawkmoth Workshop run by Sarah Morrish recently was a reminder that specimens were not pinned in a natural position so using photos alongside specimens was a good idea. We were given a pinned specimen and a page of photos of the lifecycle of the moth to work from.

In pencil we drew a vertical line on the paper and then using it as a centre line, measured and drew half of the moth against this line, then traced it. We then reversed the tracing paper to create the second half of the moth which saved a lot more measuring..

Sarah suggested we use pen sizes .01, .03 and .05 in permanent black (if the ink is not permanent it will smudge if you add a wash) and that you should store your pens horizontally, not upright in a pot as particles may cause blockages by solidifying near the tip. If there is a lot of ink on the image Sarah will leave it to the following day to dry before doing any erasing.

In order to indicate form, texture, shape, pattern and shadow, you will be using lines, stipples, broken lines and hatching. We were encouraged to take photos on our phones and change them into black and white pictures in order to learn to interpret tone. If using pen and ink only, Sarah uses Bristol Board but if she is using washes as well as ink she prefers Fabriano Classico paper.



One can sign up to Sarah's newsletters at www.natures-details.com

News from Julia Trickey:

I currently have a painting in the Saatchi Gallery as part of their 'Flowers - Flora in Contemporary Art and Culture' exhibition and will have a painting in the Botanical Art Worldwide (BAWW) exhibition coming up in Birmingham and one in the SBA exhibition, both

in May. I am demonstrating botanical art techniques at Kew Gardens on Sunday 18th May - BAWW day - and at the Chelsea Flower Show on 19th May (Press Day).

Below are a couple of snaps I took of the spring flowers at Bowood recently, It was wonderful, with swathes of different daffodils, fritillaries and other spring flowers on the grounds outside the formal gardens.



A reminder that Julia also continues with her Botanical Art Talks each month, more details can be found at www.juliatrickey.co.uk

Some Botanical Art exhibitions and events taking place this summer:

No. 1 Royal Crescent, Bath has an exhibition: *The botanical world of Mary Delany* until 15 June. (see the review by Curzon above). In conjunction with their exhibition of the work of Mrs Delany No.1 Royal Crescent have a series of related events:

28 April, Collaging Nature with Jessica Palmer

3 May, Deborah Lambkin delves into the extraordinary world of Mary Delany (to be held at the Museum of Bath Architecture)

12 May, A Botanical Cyanotype Workshop with Chloe Schofield

19 May, A Botanical Collage Workshop with Angie Girling

9 June, Botanical Collage Workshop with Chloe Schofield

For further details and to book see www.no1royalcrescent.org.uk

Celebrating their 40th anniversary the Society of Botanical Artists are holding *Plantae 2025* at The Mall Galleries, London from 28 May – 7 June. www.soc-botanical-artists.org

Flowers – Flora in Contemporary Art & Culture, running until 5 May is at the Saatchi Gallery London. www.saatchigallery.com

RHS Botanical Art and Photography Show, 13 June - 27 July also at the Saatchi Gallery, London.

The Power of Trees, is at The Shirley Sherwood Gallery, Kew until 14 September
www.kew.org

BSBA Diary Dates:

May 1	Mini workshop: The structure of flowers: Ranunculaceae family
May 14	Bowood visit: Meet 10.30 for coffee at Bowood Café
May 16	Day workshop: Megan Stallworthy
May 19	Committee meeting, please let the committee know of anything you wish to draw to their attention.
June 5	Mini workshop
June 19	Handing in of paintings for calendar, 2026
June 23	Choosing of calendar paintings

Don't forget the BSBA AGM on Thursday 17 April at 10.30 followed by coffee and a talk about Bowood House and Gardens by Christine Battle. After the talk there will be a buffet lunch – please bring a plate of food to share.

Please send items for the next BSBA Newsletter to me Janet Collett at
janet.collett@icloud.com

