



Newsletter fall 2003

YOUR VOICE!

The Coordinating Committee wants and needs to hear from members. After all, the committee is but a few volunteers working hard to make BAC an exciting and worthwhile 'meeting place' for botanical art enthusiasts. And if members don't make suggestions or their viewpoints known, the committee will work in a vacuum. We are trying to make more opportunities for consultation through the newsletter and in November with a Member Forum / Critique evening. Meantime, towards the end of this newsletter (page 2 and 4), you will find two proposals – one on the production of a special calendar, the other on the development of a BAC website. We'd like to hear from you...and silence means consent!

Lines from the Chair

Deborah usually starts her column with some "lines of poetry. This time, we've added them for her: "Nobody sees a flower – really – it's so small. It takes time – we haven't time – and to see takes time, like to have a friend takes time."

- Georgia O'Keeffe

Who says you can't teach an old dog new tricks?

In the middle of July I was fortunate enough to be on a course just outside Harrogate, North Yorkshire, England. Harlow Carr is one of the Royal Horticultural Society Gardens, a glorious place to wander around when we were not painting.

Our instructor, Colin Swinton, is a very fine artist and teacher, and a real pleasure to spend time with. The course was divided into two – introducing us first to stippling, where we attempted to indicate form, texture and colour using very small black dots – not just "dots" – but in Colin's words "beautiful dots"! It became almost compulsive, and we were, all twelve of us, both surprised and quite pleased with our results!

The second two days we spent learning the style of Charles Rennie MacIntosh. Quite different. Pencil and watercolour wash, a method where the drawing remains as part of the final image. Somewhat heavier pencil lines are left in place, and the working area is made quite wet, then prepared colour is dropped in. Interesting, quite different results, and much more fun than I expected! It was more relaxing than the stippling, and although very different from the strictly 'botanical' work that we are generally more familiar with, I certainly loosened up a little, at least for a couple of days. I rather think this technique could be used in combination with the dry brush that I am used to – I will let you know!

All in all a most enjoyable experience. My next aim is to take a purely botanical course with Colin. The Yorkshire Dales are a lovely part of the world to spend time in – couple this with art – can there be anything better?

Deborah Morrison

LAST MINUTE CATCH

If you're in Toronto and in need of a creative infusion, pop by one of the many art tours taking place over the next few weeks.

BAC members Emily Luks, Peta Lomborg and Lynda Bryden are part of the North York Art Tour – Saturday or Sunday, **September 20 and 21** from 10 – 6 at 8 Wilket Road (Bayview/York Mills).

YOUR INPUT NEEDED

After discussion at the AGM, the Coordinating committee would like to recommend that BAC produces a "birthday / special dates" calendar for mid 2004. We need your input / see page 4.

NIAGARA EXHIBITION

BAC has been invited to participate in the Niagara Horticultural Showcase – "Visions from the Gardens", June 11 - 13, 2004. This is an outdoor, full-scale event to be held at the Niagara Parks Botanical Gardens. This is not a juried show. Full details in the next newsletter

IN THE BANK

As at July 31 2003 BAC bank balance is \$4,572.47

Next critique evening and member forum – Monday November 24 at 7pm - Toronto Botanical Garden

Painting plants

© by Pamela Stagg

My childhood summers were golden times when Living Latin, geometry theorems and Macbeth could be forgotten for the world of the nature – spruce forests and tide pools and salt marshes – and my own beginning attempts to make art.

With adulthood and a demanding career, holidays shrank and often disappeared. Summer months became an air-conditioned blur. So I feel blessed by this summer, which has given me magical experiences in places stretching from a yoga centre in western Massachusetts to a wilderness art school in the remote mountains of the Yukon. My travels and the people I met gave me new and provocative insights into questions that are never far from the surface in botanical painting workshops – why do we paint and why do we choose plants as subjects?

This summer's workshop participants could not have been more different. Their diverse ranks included an elderly Toronto grandmother, a New York teacher, a farm woman from the Ottawa Valley, a senior corporate professional, a doctor from North Carolina, a Vancouver sculptor and an Austrian college student. Many had made heroic efforts and travelled considerable distances to spend time engrossed in their art.

"What makes painting and plants so important to these people?" I often wondered, as I marvelled at their intense concentration during workshop sessions. Sometimes there were obvious answers. Painting was personal time, an escape from a perpetually overflowing DayTimer. Or perhaps painting was therapy after illness or surgery.

Some of the Yukon painters were using conceptual art to work through personal issues like alienation and grief. But as I considered other workshop participants, their connection to painting and plants was harder to fathom.

Something I heard at the yoga centre came to mind. Yogic philosophy says that happiness is not to be found in the quest for material goods – which seems to create

a higher level of material needs instead of the happiness we expected. Rather, students look for happiness in the moment, through what is sometimes called flow. In a state of flow, we are so engrossed in our activity that time ceases to exist. There is just us and the plant. We are lost in our painting. Julie Moir Messervy, creator of Toronto's Music Garden, echoed this concept in a lecture at the North Hill Symposium in Vermont, calling creativity a way to transcend everyday life. Words are inadequate to describe flow, but if you've experienced it, you understand – and you want to feel that calm serenity over and over again.

But why do we choose plants for our art? What makes them so important? One answer came to me on a kayak trip in the Yukon. As I paddled the turquoise glacial water of a remote lake, I passed a derelict prospector's cabin, probably dating back to the Klondike gold rush. There it was, in the middle of nowhere, with only wolves and caribou for company. And beside the collapsing walls was a patch of bright green which appeared to be *Rheum palmatum*. This leafy southerner seemed so out of place amid the towering spruce and the fireweed that I couldn't help speculating about its origins. Had a prospector's wife planted it in a moment of nostalgia for an abandoned southern home? Was it her way of keeping the wilderness at bay? Or were flowering plants a small luxury in a life of uncertainty, hard work and few comforts? As I stared at the patch of discordant green, I realized that plants have strong symbolic meanings for us. Memories of home. Comfort. Civilization. Healing. Life itself, and the cycles of life, death and rebirth. All those are contained in plants like petals in a calyx.

I wondered how the prospector's wife felt when her husband's claim petered out and they headed over the Chilkoot Pass for yet another new dream and another new home? Did she take cuttings from the *Rheum* as she began another long trek? And did she cry as she looked back one last time at the log home in the woods and her carefully tended garden, which she would never see again?

Her *Rheum palmatum*, still flourishing in a forgotten corner of the Yukon, showed me that plants are not just plants, but icons in our lives.

A WEB PAGE FOR BAC?

We have received a proposal for a BAC web page from one of our members who is also a web designer. A web page could give us a place for BAC information, newsletters and even provide a showcase for members' artworks. But it would also cost us quite a bit of money to set it up and then maintain it. We'd like to discuss this with members in combination with our next critique evening on **MONDAY, November 24 at 7pm** at the Toronto Botanical Garden (formerly the Civic Gardens Centre). Please diarise it and look out for more information closer to the date.

Recommended reading

- Look out for Roses, A Celebration, edited by Wayne Winterrowd. Paintings by Pamela Stagg accompany essays by major figures in the world of gardening and garden writing -- people like David Austin, Peter Beales, Julie Moir Messervy (who designed The Music Garden), Christopher Lloyd and the late Graham Stuart Thomas. It also includes an essay by Pamela. Expected publication in late October.
- "Painting Flowers in Watercolour, a naturalistic approach", by Coral G. Guest. Timber Press, Portland, Oregon, 2001. (Published in association with The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew). ISBN0-88192-509-8

New BAC Committee members

At the AGM, Jan Mok and Jean Johnson joined the BAC Coordinating Committee. Jan is leading the PR and external communications effort while Jean has taken over from Leslie Staples, doing exhibitions. Any ideas, suggestion or want to help? Contact Jan at janmok@bellnet.ca and Jean at galanthus_jean@yahoo.ca.

Other committee members are Deborah Marrison (chair), Louise Chenier (secretary), John Eedy (treasurer), Emily Luks (workshops); Karen McLean (membership, internal communication), Peta Lomborg (newsletter)

U of T lecture series

On Thursday, September 11, Celia Godkin gave a talk at the University of Toronto, entitled *My Favourite Botanical Drawings of All Time*. This was part of *Continuing Studies' Best: Teaching Award Winners* lecture series. She will be giving a second lecture on November 5 at 12 noon, Celia will talk about the life and work of Beatrix Potter, as part of the SCS lecture series *Tantalizing Books That Have Inspired U of T Faculty*. This is part of a four lecture series offered from 11 am to 1 pm all on the same day, SCS 3 1137-001. Cost \$53 or \$48 for Later Life Learners. For further details check page 44 in the calendar or visit the School's website at learn.utoronto.ca

U of T's CONTINUING STUDIES: changes in Celia Godkin's courses

There have been some changes in Celia's courses. This year, for the first time, she is offering a course on Wednesday evenings in the Fall Term on water-soluble oils. This is a relatively new medium which has all the richness of traditional oils without the unpleasant solvents. For more changes see page xx.

Great finds

Heather MacFarlane sent us this 'find': Kew Beach Galleries, 2008 Queen Street East, Toronto carries rare, current and old books, collectables, and art.

"I was doing some shopping along Queen Street East in the Beaches and went into "Kew Beach Galleries", a used book store, to check out a plant book that was in the window. When I explained my interest in botanical art, the owner began showing me a variety of books illustrated with beautiful botanical paintings. Some are out of print, very expensive and she has only one of each.

- "The Besler Florilegium - Plants of the Four Seasons" published in 1987 and in it's original box - \$500.00
- " An English Florilegium" published in 1988 - \$250.00.

Editor's note: Sometimes special books can be found and purchased at good prices through eBay.

Time to squirrel it away for winter

Mr. To, at Picasso (the art supply store in Toronto) says Fabriano Classico 5 is not longer available in block form. He bought up the last supply so he does have a few blocks in case members want to stock up. It will still be available in sheet form.

2003 Events Calendar

Date	Event	Details	Contact
September 20 – October 3	“Vibrant Instincts” – paintings by award winning artist and BAC member, Emily Luks and Laurette Wijetunga	Cedar Ridge Gallery, 225 Confederation Drive, Scarborough. Reception Sunday Sept 21, 1-4, with opening by Doris McCarthy	Tel 416 396 4026
October 28-29	Theatrical floral demonstration and workshop with international designer, Kirk Pamper	Toronto Botanical Garden (Formerly Civic Gardens Centre), Leslie and Lawrence, Toronto	Information and registration 416-397-1340 or visit www.infogarden.ca
September 23 – February 29	Healing Plants of Ida Hrubesky Pemberton	Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation,	Tel 412 268 2434
September- November, Tues nights, 6:30- 9:30	Botanical Watercolour course with Leslie Staple	9 Weeks, Northern Collegiate, Mt. Pleasant and Eglinton	Toronto District School Board, Continuing Studies
October 22- November 26, Wednesdays 10-1pm	Beginning in Botanical Art with Leslie Staple	Toronto Botanical Garden, Leslie and Lawrence	Toronto Botanical Garden www.infogarden.ca 416-397-1340
November 2 - 4	Lily workshop with Pamela Stagg.	Toronto Botanical Garden, Leslie and Lawrence, Toronto	Toronto Botanical Garden (416) 397-1340 www.infogarden.ca
November 24 7pm	BAC Critique evening and Member Forum	Toronto Botanical Garden, Leslie and Lawrence, Toronto	peta@lombergnetwork.com

MONTHLY PAINTING SESSIONS			
The last Monday of every month	Monthly Painting Sessions – Patricia Bermiller’s Studio	Studio open – 9 AM to 5 PM Fee \$5 per session	If you are interested in painting once a month at a studio with other botanical artists. Patricia Bermiller at 416-483-3367.

The calendar proposal

BAC’s purpose is to popularize botanical art, provide venues for members to display their work and to publicize the association. The coordinating committee believes that a good quality, botanical art calendar does all this. This is not a fundraising activity.

The proposal is to produce an ‘anniversary / birthday’ calendar which has one page for each month, an illustration, and a list of dates with space in which birthdays or other special dates can be written. These sort of calendars are not year-specific so have a longer life, and therefore we believe, less risky.

- Size: approximately 16” in length by 5.5” in width.
- Paper: high quality
- Timelines: to be ready for sale at the Niagara show (June 11, 2004). Members should complete works by end February 2004. A jury will select the images in mid-March.
- Selection process: All entries (actual works, not slides) will be reviewed and 13 (one for each month and one for the cover) will be selected by a jury of 3 non- BAC members – an artist, a graphic designer and a botanist.
- Cost: prices are currently being sought from printers. The concept is to ensure we can produce this calendar in prudent quantities at a good selling price. We intend to break even but not necessarily make a profit. BAC funds will be used to finance the expenditure until sales revenue comes in.

PLEASE SEND COMMENTS, QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS TO peta@lombergnetwork.com BEFORE OCTOBER 15, 2003. Or you can just send a ‘yes’ or ‘no’. Remember that if we do not hear from you, we will assume that you are comfortable with this proposal.

U of T's CONTINUING STUDIES: changes in Celia Godkin's courses

If you've seen the Continuing Studies calendar you will note that there have been some changes in Celia's courses since last year. This year, for the first time, she is offering a course on Wednesday evenings in the Fall Term on water-soluble oils. This is a relatively new medium which has all the richness of traditional oils without the unpleasant solvents. Subject material will be still lifes, including fruit and shells.

Wednesday evenings in the Winter Term now offers Drawing from Nature, in which there is an opportunity to draw bones, shells and butterflies or beetles. The medium of choice is graphite or colour pencil, but you may work in watercolour if you have experience in this medium.

Due to rising costs at U of T, courses are, unfortunately more expensive and shorter; seven weeks instead of ten. In order to address the need for longer courses in botanical drawing and painting, the botanical drawing and painting courses will have an introduction, offered in the Fall and repeated in the Winter, and a follow-up offered in May-June.

In 2004-05 there will be further changes. Botanical courses at the introductory level will be offered once a year only, in the Fall, and the follow-up courses in the same time slot in the Winter (Thursday evenings for drawing, Saturday mornings for watercolour). The oil painting course will be moved to Thursday evenings in May-June, and Open Studio will be offered Saturday afternoons both Fall and Winter Terms instead of Winter only.

To help you decide if these courses are of interest, here's the week-by-week content and dates for the upcoming year:

***BOTANICAL DRAWING: INTRODUCTION SCS #0420 - 010 (Fall) - 011 (Winter)
Sat 10 am - 12:30 pm 18 Oct - 29 Nov/03 Thu 6:30 - 9 pm 5 Feb - 27 Mar/04***

- 1) Introduction to line drawing; contour exercises; observation exercise
- 2) Contour and gesture; light on form ; shading 3 - D objects
- 3) Atmospheric perspective; shading foliage
- 4) Colour study of fruit
- 5) Focus on foliage
- 6 & 7) Flower study

***BOTANICAL DRAWING: FOLLOW-UP SCS #1157 - 001 (Spring)
Tue 6:30 - 9 pm 4 May - 15 Jun/04***

- 1) Introduction to plant forms
- 2) Colour study of vegetables
- 3) Variagated leaves
- 4) Focus on flowers
- 5) White flowers (solvent background)
- 6) Coloured paper and mixed media
- 7) Roses

***BOTANICAL WATERCOLOUR: INTRODUCTION SCS # 0530 -009 (Fall) -010 (Winter)
Sat 2 - 4:30 pm 18 Oct - 29 Nov/03, Sat 10 am - 12:30 pm 14 Feb - 27 Mar/04***

- 1) Introduction to watercolour; the colour wheel; wash and graded wash
- 2) Leaves
- 3) Fruit
- 4) Foliage
- 5) Single flower
- 6 & 7) Flower grouping

BOTANICAL WATERCOLOUR: FOLLOW-UP SCS # 1158-001 (Spring)
Thu 6:30 - 9 pm 6 May - 17 Jun/04

- 1) Introduction; demonstration of stretching watercolour paper
Drawing basics: the importance of contour, gesture and negative space
- 2) Vegetables
- 3) An informal technique: ink line and watercolour
- 4) Botanical art technique for flower painting
- 5) White flowers
- 6) Mixed media and special effects
- 7) Roses

WATER SOLUBLE OILS SCS # 1160-001 (Fall)
Wed 6:30 - 9 pm 15 Oct - 26 Nov/03

- 1) Introduction to water soluble oils; demonstration, composition exercises
- 2 & 3) Colour mixing demonstration
Students have two weeks for a simple still life
- 4 & 5) Demonstration of direct painting on a coloured ground
Students have two weeks for a still life of fruit
- 6 & 7) Demonstration of the glazing technique of the Old Masters
Students have two weeks for a still life of shells

OPEN STUDIO SCS # 0501-002 (Winter)
Sat 2 - 4:30 pm 14 Feb - 27 Mar/04

- 1) Introduction; contour & gesture drawings; thumbnails for composition
 - 2 & 3) Wash; shading & value studies (nuts, shells etc.)
 - 4 & 5) Mixed media; iridescence (butterflies, beetles, shells or botanicals)
 - 6) Using photographic reference (photographs of pets or buildings)
 - 7) Scratchboard (pinecones, black beetles)
- Students wishing to work independently of the lesson plan are welcome to do so

DRAWING FROM NATURE SCS # 1159 - 001 (Winter)
Wed 6:30 - 9 pm 4 Feb - 17 Mar/04

- 1) Introduction; contour and gesture drawing; shading simple shapes
- 2) Shading complex shapes part 1; long bones
- 3) Shading complex shapes part 2; skulls
- 4) Introduction to colour pencil; drawing butterflies in correct proportion
- 5) Colour drawing of butterflies
- 6) Integrating volume, pattern and texture: shells
- 7) Completion of shell drawing