

the Botanical Artist

Journal of the American Society of Botanical Artists



2022 ASBA Awards:
Five Artists Achieve
Botanical Eminence

Botanica Collected:
The Forbes Pigment Collection
by Narayan Khandekar

The Artist in the Studio:
Australia
by Melinda Edstein

Hyunjin Cho wins award

Hyunjin Cho won Highly Commended for her *Agapanthus africanus* 'Blue Triumphator' in the 2022 Margaret Flockton Awards. These prestigious awards commemorate Margaret Flockton's contribution to Australian botanical illustration. The Maple-Brown Family and the Foundation & Friends of the Botanic Gardens sponsor the annual competition for excellence in scientific botanical illustration. In 2022, 52 artists from 21 countries submitted 74 entries.



The judges commented about Hyunjin Cho's work: "A complex composition, deftly balancing maximum information with clarity of arrangement. All identifying features are interpreted with a natural informality, rather than being overly stylistic. Scale bars, while numerous, are delicately arranged so as not to overwhelm the other information on the plate."

It is Hyunjin's ambition to work as an illustrator at a botanical garden. At graduate school, she majored in art education and taught art in Korea. After she moved to the US, she learned botanical art and obtained her certificate from Filoli. To develop her skills, she submits work to exhibitions and competitions. For the Margaret Flockton competition, Hyunjin chose a subject that grows in her garden so she could carefully observe and record its life cycle in detail. **-submitted by Gillian Rice**



TOP Hyunjin Cho **ABOVE** *Agapanthus africanus* 'Blue Triumphator', African lily, 11 x 14 in, pen and ink on paper, ©2022, Hyunjin Cho

Stamped Envelope: Northern Cardinal on White Pine



As a child of five I climbed a pine tree to rob a blue jay of an egg. This didn't work out as planned, but my interest in birds remained. I began my professional career as a bird painter and became an entomology illustrator.

During my residencies at the Oak Spring Garden Foundation, I sketched the birds breeding within the Rokeby farm meadows and posted the studies on Instagram. My drawings caught the eye of a United States Postal Service (USPS) art director, who asked me to paint the northern cardinal for a stamped envelope.



The USPS requested that I include a native plant, not an easy find in January! After a brief discussion we chose white pine. Size requirements were specific and scaled for the final size of 2.25 inches wide by 1.5 inches high. A committee of experts reviewed my sketches for accuracy and a pleasing composition. The finished piece (7 x 9 inches) is pen and ink with watercolor on paper and took over three months to complete. The USPS retains all the work from concept sketches to finished painting for the United States Postal Museum. The USPS will release the cardinal envelope in 2023. **-submitted by Kandy Phillips**

ABOVE, TOP Finished envelope with cardinal stamp **BOTTOM** Kandy bird-watching with binoculars.

A Conversation with Elizabeth Whelan

INTERVIEW BY *Laura Bethmann*

On your website, you mention that you appreciate "the research and care that goes into a science-based look at the natural and botanical world around us."

My father was a research metallurgist. As children, we visited his lab and



Elizabeth Whelan

I remember being impressed with the scanning electron microscopes. In my teens, my first paid illustration job was of the crystalline structure of molybdenum! I went on to my first career in graphic design and illustration, taking with me a love for detail. Fully presenting what has captured the artist about a subject requires more than simply repeating what can be seen at a glance. It's the deeper look that brings out the wonder of the natural world. An artist does not have to become

an expert in her subject to lovingly draw it. But I think most artists would agree that once you start exploring and learning about a subject, the art becomes more personal.

In what ways are you inspired by the plant life where you live on Martha's Vineyard? The plant life here is limited due to our geographic isolation. We have few species of trees, but lots of flowers and other plants. This island receives a good amount of fog and mist, so we have wonderful lichen and mushroom varieties. It's fascinating to see how plant life has adapted to the harsh coastal conditions.

You also paint portraits on commission and have created the Martha's Vineyard Drawing Prize, now in its fifth year. Drawing is a foundational skill. I feel that any vehicle to get people drawing is worthwhile, so starting this competition shows would-be artists what can be done with simple tools and a will to create. And for highly skilled artists, there are few drawing competitions. I thought I would encourage people on Martha's Vineyard to draw, but it's much larger now with entries from around the US and Canada. (Any ASBA member can enter.)

What is your working process for your new series of botanical paintings? I'm interested in how humans, especially artists, see, and how we interpret a subject into art in a very individual manner. I emulate what I see using strong design and color complexity. I start with pencil sketches, then build layers of color. I bring in the essence of a plant's shape and how it grows, tuning in to a certain degree of detail. It's my perception of the glorious complexity of nature I am after most of all. 🌿



Polygonatum cuspidatum, Japanese knotweed, 11.5 x 8 in, graphite on paper, ©2022, Katy Lyness



Late Summer Pole Beans (*Phaseolus vulgaris* Rattlesnake and Purple Podded), 16 x 12 in, oil on canvas, ©Elizabeth Whelan

The Embankment On My Mind

Katy Lyness, with the Embankment Coalition, gathered 16 botanical artists and 28 New Jersey artists working in various media for an exhibition, *The Embankment On My Mind*, at New Jersey City University, November 1 - December 16, 2022.

Curated by Peter Delman and Midori Yoshimoto and organized by Maureen Crowley and Katy, the exhibition focused on the Embankment, an abandoned railway in the heart of Jersey City, where nature has displaced past industrial development with forest and meadows. The Embankment Coalition's conservation plan integrates the land with the East Coast Greenway, 3,000 miles of trails from Maine to Florida, and protects habitats for wildlife.

Katy participated in a panel discussion, "The Embankment on My Mind: Bridging Science and Art." Her artwork proposed a reevaluation of invasive species Japanese knotweed, not as a pariah but as a plant containing compounds for medicinal use, a bioaccumulator, and an edible. This opportunity to decide a plant's place in the landscape shows botanical art can contribute to environmental discussions. The merging of botanical artists' documentation of flora and fauna on the Embankment with local artists' interpretations reflects a fervent eco-art movement to conserve nature. For participating artists, and more, see bit.ly/3Xl7Y8I **-submitted by Donna Miskend**