



THE UNIVERSITY OF
**WESTERN
AUSTRALIA**

Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery



Education Kit

Nikulinsky Naturally | 25 May – 17 August 2019



Philippa Nikulinsky, *Banksia tricuspis*, *Point Resolution 2017*, 2017, watercolour, pencil & gouache on Arches hot press paper, 68 x 100cm

Education Kit

Botanical Art

An exhibition of work titled *Nikulinsky Naturally*, by Philippa Nikulinsky AM, a Perth-based, internationally recognised botanical and wildlife artist, is on display in the period 25 May – 17 August 2019 at the Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery at the University of Western Australia.

The exhibition provides a survey of her work from the 1970s to the present and provides a perspective on the unique qualities of her practice - focusing on the evolution of her working methodology and exploring the ways in which she continues to interrogate the botanical riches of the Western Australian landscape.

This education kit has been prepared to complement the exhibition. It has been produced to assist teachers and students to explore related themes including aspects of Western Australian flora and ways that contemporary artists have used botanical specimens in their artwork, as well as key features of botanical art.

The kit provides a brief overview of the features, histories and contemporary practice of botanical art, laying a foundation for further exploration. A practical unit of art making that addresses the 'Making' outcomes required of the Year 9 Visual Art syllabus of SCSA, WA has been included, however the content may be adapted to any year level.

Features of Traditional Botanical Art

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Botanical art depicts the form, colour, and details of plant species• It is the art of documenting plants with a scientific approach, with the intention to be useful to the scientist• Botanical art has aesthetic value and artistic merit• The subject is most often drawn against a plain background• Typically, the whole organism is shown• Materials often used are pencils, watercolor and/or ink• It is scientifically and botanically accurate, but does not always completely | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• depict all the information that would be required by botanists• It can take a realistic approach but may depict things that cannot be seen, such as the life cycle of a plant• It often displays roots, seeds and buds as well as flowers and leaves• It can depict mechanisms of plant, such as seed dispersal• It may include pollinators of plants (such as birds, bees and butterflies)• Is very detailed and refined• It does not include gestural or scribbled lines |
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Western Australian Flora

- There are an estimated 13,000 native plant species in Western Australia, of which more than 3,000 are yet to be formally named.
- Australia's southwest corner, spanning from Shark Bay in the north to Esperance in the southeast is one of only 34 biodiversity hotspots in the world and one of two in Australia: the southwest WA and the forests of eastern Australia (Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions Parks and Wildlife, n.d). These are some of the earth's most biologically rich, yet threatened terrestrial regions.
- The southwest region of Western Australia has been isolated for millions of years by the vast central Australian deserts and the oceans to the west and south. Its isolation has supported and enabled this diverse and unique environment to thrive.
- The World Wide Fund for nature (WWF) defines this region as one of the most ecologically significant areas in the world due to the high number of rare and endangered species found there.

Western History of Botanical Art

The earliest botanical science began with practical plant knowledge passed from generation to generation in the oral traditions of paleolithic hunter-gatherers.

Evidence of some of the earliest portrayals of plants and trees appear in tombs and temples built around four thousand years ago in Mesopotamia and Egypt.

A Greek scholar, Theophrastus (c371-286 BC), a student of Aristotle, was interested in all aspects of human knowledge, especially natural science. His curiosity led him to research and report his findings on germination, cultivation and propagation - among other discoveries - which included the grouping of plants into categories, one of the first systems of classification, which led Linnaeus to call him 'the father of botany'. He wrote many books, including the 10 - volume

set, *Historia Plantarum (Enquiry into Plants)* the first publication of this kind; this was considered the beginning of modern botany.

The Medieval preoccupation with the medicinal value of plants led to extensive research into the properties of plants and the reproduction of medicinal works of classical antiquity in books and manuscripts called *Herbals*. During the Renaissance (14th-17th centuries in Europe) botany emerged as an independent science, distinct from agriculture and medicine (American Society of Botanical Artists, 2019). The invention of the microscope, and the expansion of trade and exploration beyond Europe, enabled botanical science, and the associated illustration of plants, to grow along with implementation of improved systems and processes of naming, describing and classifying plants.

Our shared botanical history in Western Australia

For more than 60,000 years, Western Australian Aboriginal cultural groups have passed information regarding knowledge of plants down through generations. This has included their uses, such as for sources of food, shelter, tools and medicine, as well as the relationships of plant life cycles to seasonal climate changes and the habits of animals and birds, subsequently also impacting on cultural life, hunting and gathering activities. This knowledge has been passed on orally and/or by practice. Noongar, also known as the Bibbulmann, people of the southwest lived their lifestyle according to the seasons and location. The six seasons are Bunuru, Djilba, Makaru, Djeraon, Kambarang and Birak. They had an intimate knowledge of the flora, including treatment of toxic plants so as to be edible or to be useful for medicinal purposes.

During the period of European invasion and colonisation, threats to plants were significant from the widespread clearing of land for crops and pasture and other practices including mining and the timber industry. Many plants and animals have become rare or extinct and the maintenance and sharing of Aboriginal botanical knowledge has been largely disrupted, and some lost, as people previously living in harmony with the land were forced to conform to different lifestyles. Great efforts are being made by local Aboriginal people, together with others such as ethnobotanists to rebuild and maintain the vast and invaluable knowledge that had been formed over these tens of thousands of years. Vivienne “Binyaarn” Hansen, a Ballardong Wadjuk Yorga woman from the Bibbulmun Nation, or Noongar people of the south west, Western Australia, has said that ‘Both Western scientific and traditional Bibbulman knowledge and skills can be combined in a powerful and creative beneficial way to assist in the ongoing management and threats to our fauna’ (Hansen, 2018).

The earliest collection of flora in Western Australia by Europeans was most likely of two flora species that were collected by Willem de Vlamingh, the Dutch explorer, during his exploration of the area near the Swan River in 1697. However, the first significant information regarding Western Australian vegetation was taken back to Europe by the British Captain Dampier, who collected 40 species from the tropical regions. Knowledge was expanded with the collections made by scientists on other expeditions, including those of the *Geographe* and *Naturaliste* under Baudin and Peron (1801,) and Flinder’s *Investigator* expedition (1801), which also included the botanical artist Ferdinand Bauer.

During the colonial period, with the beginning of land settlement following the 1829 declaration of the Swan River area as a British Colony, extensive collections were made and recorded in journals. Many and various collections were made by settler botanists as well as botanist visitors and were often processed by other specialists in Europe, including Stephen Endlicher in Vienna, who described specimens collected by Carl von Hugel and Ferdinand Bauer, and John Lindley of England, who described plants including those collected by James Drummond and Georgiana Molloy of the Swan River Colony. Drummond was an important ‘colonial’ botanical collector and investigator who was connected with the foundation of the colony. A naturalist from Germany, Dr Ludwig Preiss, collected some 2,718 specimens in 1838. The thoroughness of Preiss’s documentation, including the biology of the types as well as detailed notes on geographical distribution and Lindley’s descriptions of 283 new plant species contributed to important documentation of Western Australian species in traditional European systems of Botanical studies (Gibson, 2007).

Contemporary Practice

In the past, illustrations of plant life were used by physicians, pharmacists, botanical scientists and gardeners for identification, analysis and classification. Botanical illustration has been increasingly complemented by photography, with each medium contributing particular values to documentation and study. Illustration, for example, allows for sharp focus and attention to details of form and structure while photography is useful at the macro-scale, as with showing habitat, and at micro-scale, as with revealing anatomical textures, (Hickman, Yates & Hopper, 2017). While botanical illustrations are not the only means for documentation for researchers today, they have become an inspiration for artists who are paying homage to plant life, and also this traditional form of documentation, in a contemporary way through their own artworks.

Over many years now there has been an increasing interest and concern regarding, the changes occurring in the natural world and the central role plants play in maintaining healthy ecosystems. There is a sense of increasing urgency to record today's changing plant life for future generations, and also the value of using their images to increase public appreciation of plants and their role in the environment.

Working with scientists, conservationists, horticulturists, galleries and illustrators, artists are pushing the boundaries of what has traditionally been considered part of the genre of botanical art. While artists who represent botanical subjects today still preserve accuracy based on those long - established traditions that integrated the history of art and the sciences of botany, horticulture, medicine and agriculture, they are also increasingly concerned with the beauty of the plant and the depiction and interrogation of its image within a cultural context. These artworks may also push traditional boundaries with the inclusion of flamboyant palettes, narratives and/or symbolic colour.



Gregory Pryor, *Herbario Nojciano (Wein)* (detail series of 13), 2003, watercolour, pencil, spirit based ink and collage on paper, 42x28 cm (h,w), The University of Western Australia Art Collection, Gift of the Friends of the Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery and the James RH Watson Watercolour Fund, 2008, © Gregory Pryor

‘They are, though, shrunken ghosts of their former selves, torn from their earth, captured and transported from the ground on which they grew and the environment that sustained them. Pryor’s paintings are shadows, doubly so in that they are pictures of these dry and distant remainders - the compressed and desiccated three-dimensional, organic plant rendered in further flattened and even drier form.’ (p105, Barrett-Lennard and Watson, 2009)



Robyn Stacey, *Leidenmaster I*, 2003, type C print, 96x150cm (h,w), The University of Western Australia Art Collection, University Senate Grant, 2008, © Robyn Stacey

From the 1990s, Stacey’s practice using photography, increasingly focused ‘on the representation of nature in museums and collections. *Leidenmaster I* is from a series, *The Collector’s Nature*, which looked at seventeenth and eighteenth century natural history collections.

The books and specimens depicted, dating from as early as the 1540s are from the National Herbarium of the Netherlands at Leiden, and include the earliest example of a collection of plants from outside Europe and the oldest herbarium extant.’ (p 113, Barrett-Lennard & Watson, 2009) .

References

'A Brief History of Botanical Art', (2019), *American Society of Botanical Artists*. Retrieved from <https://www.asba-art.org/article/chapter-2-early-portrayal-plants>

Barrett-Lennard, John & Watson, Allan, (2009). *A Partial View: The University of Western Australia Art Collection*. Crawley, WA: University of Western Australia, Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery

Gibson, Neil, (ed), 'The translation of Diels 1906 "Plant Life in Western Australia"'(2007), *Conservation Science Western Australia*, 6 (2), pp.43-64 (refer to <https://www.dpaw.wa.gov.au/images/documents/about/science/cswa/articles/29.pdf>)

Hansen, Vivienne , *Seasons of the Bibulman*, public presentation at the FLORA Symposium at Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery, 7 April 2018

Hickman, Ellen J, Yates, Colin J, Hopper, Stephen D, (2017), 'Botanical illustration and photography: A southern hemisphere', *Australian Systematic Botany*, 30 (4), pp. 291-325

Useful resources for Western Australian Plants

- Interesting local and interstate articles on wildflowers and plants
<https://www.abc.net.au/science>
<https://www.dpaw.wa.gov.au/plants-and-animals/plants>
- Wildflowers of Western Australia
<https://www.australiangeographic.com.au/topics/science-environment/2017/05/wildflowers-of-western-australia-3/>
- Link to the Western Australian Herbarium
<https://florabase.dpaw.wa.gov.au/>
- Western Australian guides to local plants
https://www.westernaustralia.com/en/things_to_do/forest_and_flowers/pages/wawildflowers.aspx#/
<https://www.westaustrianexplorer.com/the-incredible-wildflowers-of-western-australia/>

Useful Resources for Aboriginal Plant Knowledge and Colonial Botanists

- Visit the British Natural History Museum Website. Here you will find botanical drawings from early explorations of Australia.
<https://www.nhm.ac.uk/our-science.html>
- Aboriginal Plant use visit
<https://www.anbg.gov.au/aboriginal-resources/index.html>
- Western Australian Museum Website
<http://museum.wa.gov.au/explore/articles/th-odore-leschenault-de-la-tour-botanist-baudin-expedition>
- Hansen, Vivienne & Horsfall, John, (2016), *Noongar Bush Medicine, Medicinal Plants of the South-West of Western Australia*, UWA Publishing, Perth Western Australia

Useful resources for features of botanical art

- Royal Kew Gardens Herbarium
<https://www.kew.org/science/collections-and-resources/collections/herbarium>
- An overview of traditional and contemporary botanical art with a British focus
<https://www.botanicalartandartists.com/what-is-botanical-art.html>
- Humphrey, Sarah J, (2018), *Botanical Art with Scientific Illustration*, The Crowood Press, Wiltshire, UK



Clare McFarlane, *First Principals i-iv*, 2006, acrylic and screen print on board, four panels 18 x 18cm ea, CCWA 843. Cruthers Collection of Women's Art, The University of Western Australia. © Clare McFarlane

Art Making Project

Using the Western Australian Curriculum for Year 9 Visual Arts in the School Curriculum and Standards Authority as a guide, this unit of work investigates drawing, screen-printing and textile stitching techniques to explore the rich and varied forms found in Western Australian plants.

Students are encouraged to investigate, observe and record local flora through traditional drawing techniques, then apply a combination of silk screening and basic stitching techniques to embellish their artwork.

The following information includes support materials to guide skills in the development of this printmaking project with a:

- Unit planner
- A Glossary that outlines:
 - Drawing techniques
 - Printmaking guide
 - Stitching techniques
- Examples of completed artworks

Unit Planner

Studio Area: Printmaking/ Textiles

MAKING

The following outcomes are adapted from the Western Australian Curriculum for Year 9 Visual Arts as specified on the School Curriculum and Standards Authority website.

<https://k10outline.scsa.wa.edu.au/home/teaching/curriculum-browser/the-arts/visual-arts2#year-9-syllabus>

Inquiry

- Ideas for art-making that are appropriate for chosen discipline
- Exploration of media, material and technologies in order to understand how they might be applied to a variety of art forms
- Visual art language that is used in the development of an artwork
- Recognition and use of visual art conventions
- Introduction of ideas inspired by an artistic style into student's own artwork

Art Practice

- Materials, techniques and technologies explored so as to develop and represent their own artistic intention
- Techniques and processes chosen to develop and refine an artwork when representing particular ideas and subject matter

Presentation



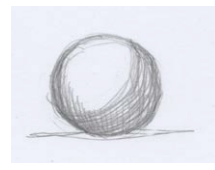



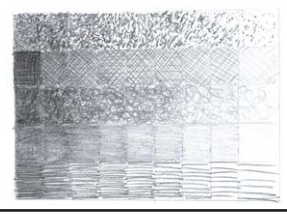
- Consideration of audience engagement and display options when exhibiting an artwork that is related to a particular art form
- Resolved artwork presented with consideration of personal expression and the audience; this may be verbal or in written form

Materials

Drawing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pencils • Paper • Images of Wildflowers • Water colour paints
Printmaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Silkscreens • Riso Prints (machine) or outsource • Printing inks (fabric) • Squeegee
Textiles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thread • Beads • Embroidery hoops • Fabric - patterned fabric such as patch work swatches are ideal • Needles • Scissors

INQUIRY	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> View and research ways in which artists have recorded plants and/or wildflowers for botanical records. Collect images and record local plants and/or wildflowers in your area. Search through publications, images online, in the library and /or other sources for examples of Western Australian wildflowers. Observe and define the styles and techniques used by botanical artists 	
ART PRACTICE	
Drawing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore drawing conventions and ways of rendering form (see the Glossary) Explore ways in which artists have recorded plants/flowers for scientific records Draw at least two flowers as botanical studies Consider reducing the tonal values to create contour line drawing From your studies, choose one flower and transform this into a two-colour design
Colour studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete at least two different studies, experimenting with colours Separate the design into a flat base colour that is the silhouette of the flower and another colour that will be rendered as detail (see examples on last page of glossary)
Printmaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare a hand cut stencil of the flower silhouette Silkscreen this simple shape on to fabric Print the silhouette - let dry The line drawing will need to be photocopied so it appears as a black and white image Prepare a Riso screen of the detailed line drawing of the flower (see notes in the Glossary for definition). Print the Riso screen image of the contour drawing over the top of this simple silhouette shape
Textiles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using thread, embellish the design with a variety of stitches Consider the use of blanket, arrowhead running and star stitches as well as french knots Small beads can be included if desired
PRESENTATION	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using an embroidery hoop as framing device, stretch the fabric and present it for display. Write a review of the processes used to create the artwork and critically analyse your creative journey. 	

Glossary

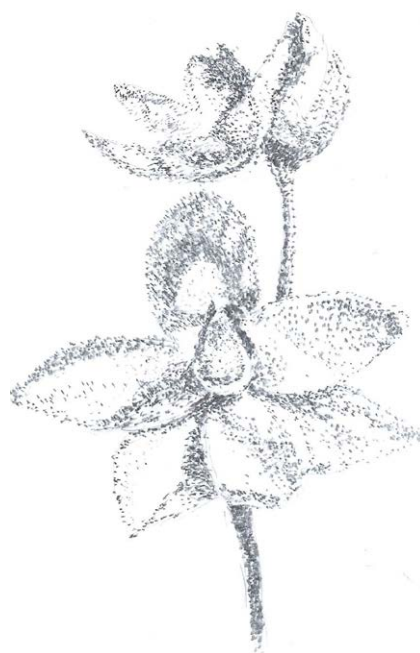
DRAWING TECHNIQUES		
Hatching	series of lines that do not cross but rather follow the same direction that can be used in increasing intensity to convey tone	
Crosshatching	two or more lines placed at angles to each other that intersect or cross, used to create deep tonal value and also a rough texture	
Contouring	are lines that follow the natural shape of the object, used to illustrate form.	
Stippling	using small dots to create texture, pattern or tone, used a lot for fine detail and soft finishes	
Scribble	looping free form lines, useful for quick sketches that convey tone through gestural marks	
Value/Shading	the value is the lightness or darkness of tone, it can be created by increasing the frequency and layering of strokes	
Contrast	can be created by varying the tone or thickness of the line or value of the technique	



Combination of all techniques



Contour as outline



Stipple with value/shading



Contour creating form



Combination: contour,
crosshatching, value/shading
effects

PRINTMAKING

Silk Screening Techniques with a Paper Cut Stencil

Trace the outline of your plant shape on to lithograph paper, using a scalpel or similar tool, cut out the shape to leave a window or hole in the paper

Attach the stencil on to a silkscreen and print the image on to a backdrop

Patterned fabrics such as patchwork swatches make excellent backdrops for a simple one colour silhouette print

Follow this link for a tutorial on how to create a paper cut stencil print. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=22OgwP74l1U>



Risograph Screen Print

A Risograph is a stencil duplicator whereby stencils are created from black and white photocopies of artworks. This is a very simple and immediate way to create a single colour silkscreen. The Riso screen will give you a clear and clean print to place on top of the silkscreen silhouette.

To process the Riso screen it is best to use a black and white design that has clear detail and high tonal contrast. Alternatively, you can use photographic emulsions or hand cut acetate paper may be used to create a stencil.

If a Riso screen machine is not available, you can outsource production to large educational art suppliers.



TEXTILES - STITCHING TECHNIQUES

Using a variety of stitches, select and define pattern and/or areas of detail to embellish the surface of the artwork.

Blanket Stitch



French Knots



Cross Stitch



Arrow Head



Star Stitch



Examples





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CULTURAL PRECINCT

Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery
The University of Western Australia
35 Stirling Highway
Crawley WA 6009
Tel: +61 8 6488 3707
Email: lwag@uwa.edu.au
lwag.uwa.edu.au
Gallery open
Tues - Sat, 11am - 5pm
FREE ADMISSION
CRICOS Provider Code: 00126G

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Cover image: Philippa Nikulinsky, *Xanthoreea thornstonii Before and After the Fire* (detail), 2017-2018, shell, pencil & watercolour on rice paper, 42 x 700cm