

TODAY'S
MASTERS

A GARDEN OF ARTISTRY GROWS

Although the tradition of painting and drawing plants can be traced back to antiquity, it reached its zenith in western Europe between the 17th and 19th centuries. This area of artmaking is not nearly as widespread today, yet the quality of work being made is still extremely high, and its quantity is growing steadily.

As ever, botanical art combines aspects of science and art, requiring the artist to understand the physical structure of plants and to communicate this knowledge in an aesthetically pleasing manner. Botanical works are made for pleasure, for sale in galleries, and also for study, much as parts of the human body are illustrated to help scientists and doctors understand anatomy.

Without having sought it, the field of botanical art has acquired an “eco-warrior” aspect because many plant species are disappearing due to climate change. Recording the appearance of at-risk specimens is an urgent priority for the field, and implicit within the very act is a plea that viewers do all they can to ensure the plant’s survival.

A leading force in the field is the American Society of Botanical Artists, a nonprofit organization incorporated in New York City in 1995. Guided by its board and executive director Diane Batson-Smith, ASBA has regional chapters across the country that work with the national headquarters to promote public awareness of contemporary botanical art, honor its traditions, and further its development. Most of its 1,600 individual members (based in the U.S. and abroad) are watercolorists, though some work in graphite, pen and ink, etching, acrylic, and oil. (Some work in more than one medium.) Of the watercolorists, most work on paper, though



MARGARET BEST (b. 1951), *Pandanus utilis*, 2017, watercolor on paper, 18 1/2 x 14 1/4 in., on view in *Out of the Woods* this November

more are using vellum, the texture of which offers a distinctive effect. Ever more botanical artists are depicting wildflowers and other plants in their native habitats and at all times of year (rather than only when the flowers are in bloom).

ASBA’s exhibitions coordinator Carol Woodin (an artist herself) keeps busy year-round facilitating the jurying process and overseeing publication of the handsome catalogues that document these shows. Three important juried exhibitions are coming in the year ahead. On view at the New York Design Center from November 3 through December 22 will be ASBA’s *20th Annual International*. Opening the same month, but at the New York Botanical Garden (where the society is headquartered), is the exhibition *Out of the Woods: Celebrating Trees in Public Gardens*. The last of the trio is *Botanical Art Worldwide: America’s Flora*, which will open next May at the U.S. Botanic Garden in Washington, D.C. This will constitute America’s first collaboration with partner organizations in 20 other countries, all of which are launching their own exhibitions focused on native flora next spring. (Just for example, *Art of the Plant* will appear at Ottawa’s Canadian Museum of Nature.) This swell will crest on May 18, which has been designated Worldwide Day of Botanical Art. *Fine Art Connoisseur’s* free weekly e-newsletter, *Fine Art Today*, will cover all related programming next spring so that readers can attend as many of these exhibitions as possible.

In the meantime, enjoy this garden of beautiful, well researched images made by some of the brightest botanical talents working today.

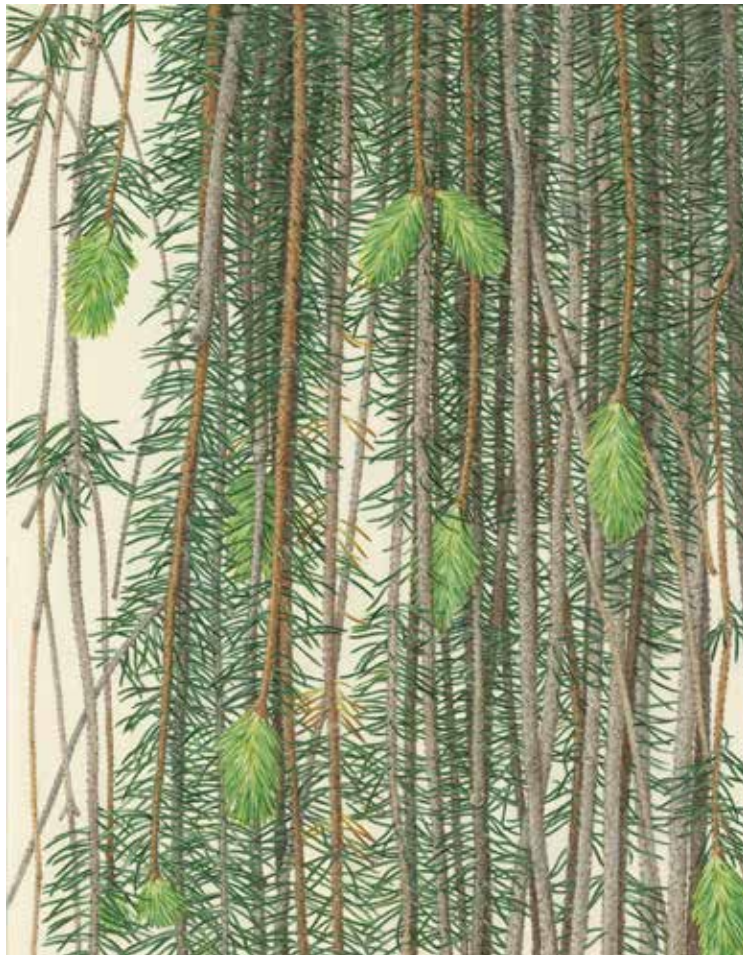
Kelly Compton is a contributing writer to *Fine Art Connoisseur*.



BONNIE BONNER (b. 1947), *Pinus Jeffreyi (Jeffrey Pine Cone)*, 2015, watercolor on paper, 14 x 11 in., collection of the artist



JEAN EMMONS (b. 1953), *Double Poppy II*, 2017, watercolor on vellum, 13 x 13 in., collection of the artist



INGRID FINNAN (b. 1944), *Picea abies "Virgata" (Snake Branch Spruce)*, 2016, oil on paper, 13 1/2 x 10 1/2 in., on view in *Out of the Woods* this November



LARA GASTINGER (b. 1976), *Kale*, 2014, watercolor on paper, 14 x 11 in., collection of the artist



(TOP LEFT) MONIKA DEVRIES GOHLKE (b. 1940), *Datura metel*, 2016, hand-colored print (copperplate etching, aquatint, chine collé), 30 x 22 in., collection of the artist ■ (TOP RIGHT) HEEYOUNG KIM (b. 1963), *Darwin's Orchid*, 2017, watercolor on paper, 30 x 22 in., Joel Oppenheimer Gallery, Chicago

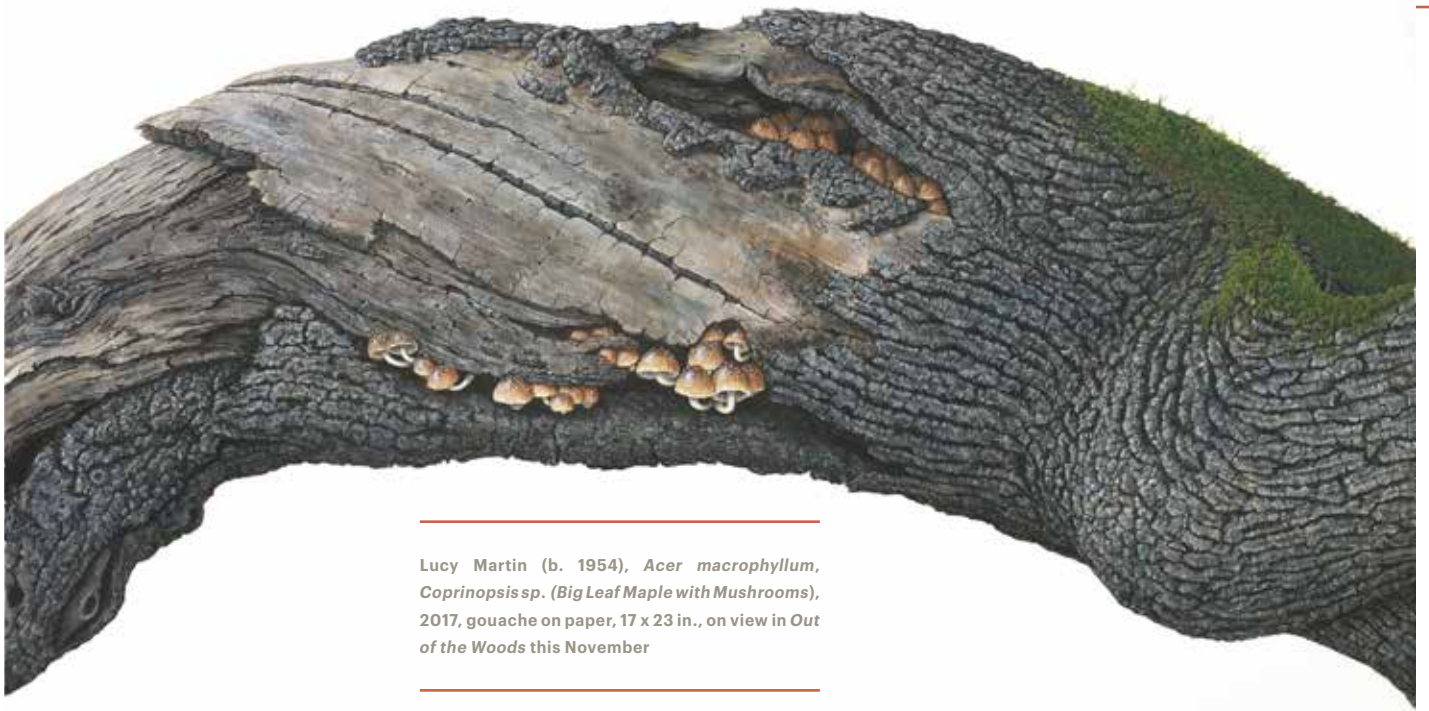


STEPHANIE LAW (b. 1976), *Rosa grandiflora (Cardinal Song)*, 2015, watercolor on paper, 17 x 23 in., collection of the artist

Marjorie Leggitt (b. 1955), *Max's Gold Squash*, 2016, watercolor on paper, 16 x 12 in., private collection



JOYCE RINEY PETERS (b. 1955),
Asclepias tuberosa (A Milkweed
for the Monarch Butterfly), 2011,
watercolor on paper, 22 x 15 in.,
collection of the artist



Lucy Martin (b. 1954), *Acer macrophyllum*,
Coprinopsis sp. (Big Leaf Maple with Mushrooms),
2017, gouache on paper, 17 x 23 in., on view in *Out
of the Woods* this November



(TOP) GILLIAN RICE (b. 1955), *Quercus sp. (Oak Leaf and Acorn)*, 2016, watercolor on paper, 12 x 9 in., collection of Jennifer Muto ■ (BOTTOM) CONSTANCE SCANLON (b. 1956), *Gooseberries Past Prime*, 2016, watercolor on vellum, 8 x 12 in., private collection





(TOP LEFT) HEIDI SNYDER (b. 1953), *Forest Floor Up Close*, 2017, colored pencil on drafting film, 22 x 15 in., collection of the artist

■ (TOP RIGHT) KERRI WELLER (b. 1958), *Tulipa x hybrid (Parrot Tulips)*, 2012, oil on panel, 18 x 13 in., private collection, New York City

■ (BOTTOM) NANCY BALMERT (b. 1954), *Iris germanica "Clarence" (White Purple Iris)*, 2016, oil on canvas, 40 x 36 in., Marshall Gallery of Fine Art, Scottsdale
