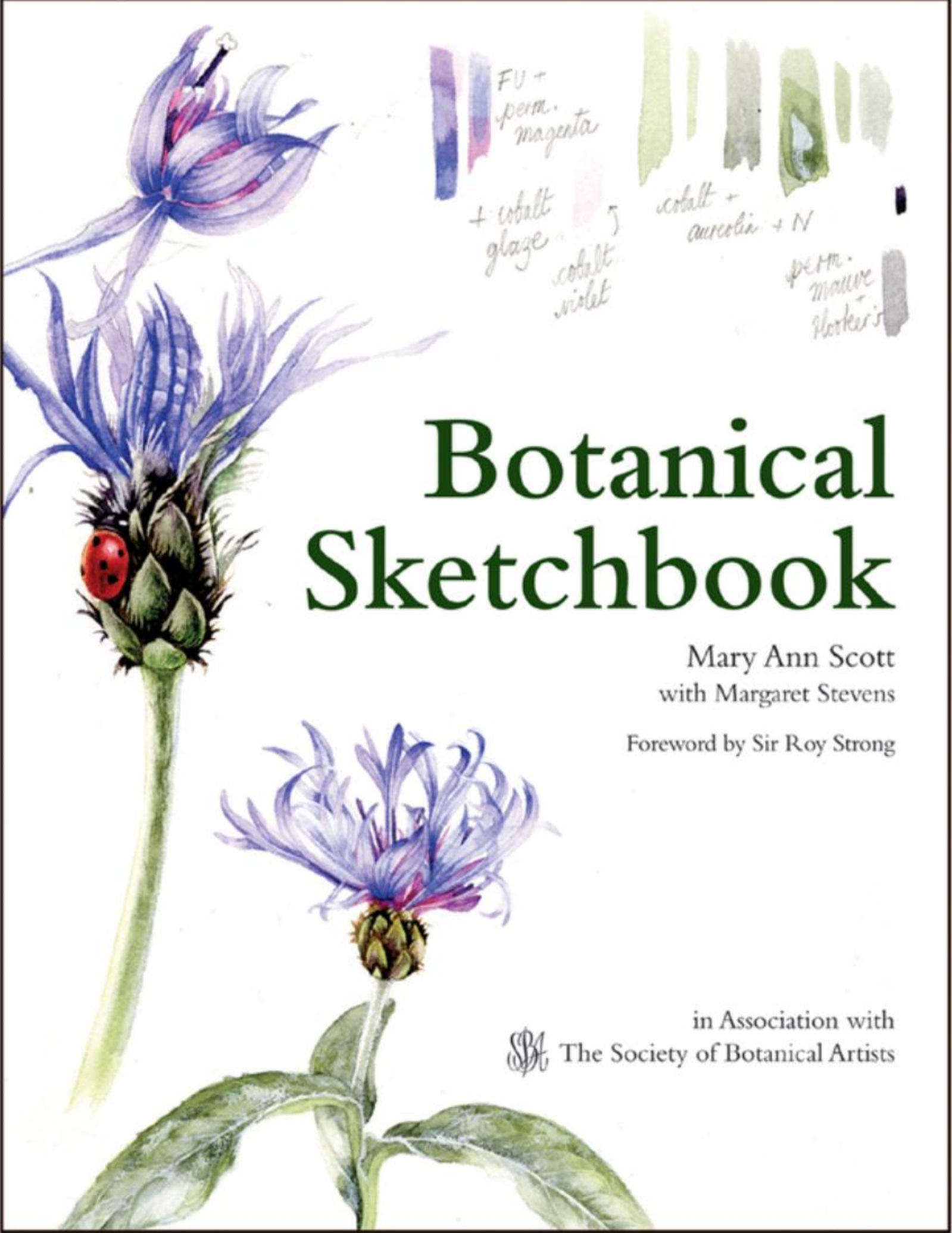


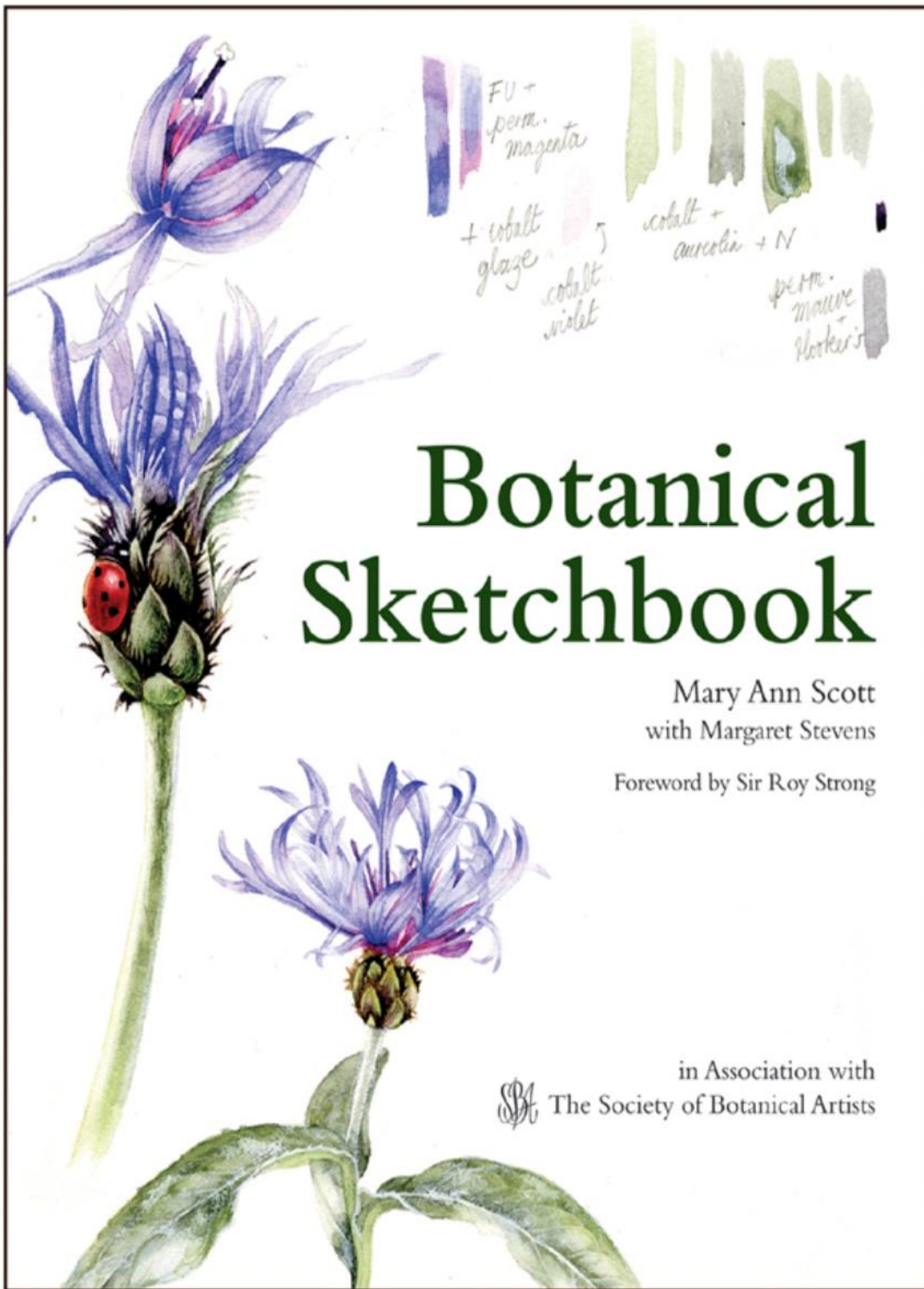
The cover features a detailed botanical illustration of a cornflower (Centaurea cyanus) with a ladybug on its green, spiky base. The flower has delicate, light blue petals with darker blue veins. In the upper right corner, there are several color swatches and handwritten notes: 'FU + perm. magenta' with a purple swatch; '+ cobalt glaze' with a pinkish-purple swatch; 'cobalt violet' with a violet swatch; 'cobalt + aureolin + N' with a yellow-green swatch; and 'perm. mauve Hooker's' with a mauve swatch. The title 'Botanical Sketchbook' is written in a large, bold, green serif font.

Botanical Sketchbook

Mary Ann Scott
with Margaret Stevens

Foreword by Sir Roy Strong

in Association with
 The Society of Botanical Artists



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with Margaret Stevens PSBA

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BATSFORD

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Author's note: Colour Abbreviations

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Iris graminea *and* Jerusalem sage.

Foreword

The revival of botanical painting during recent decades is one which has given me great personal joy and delight. As we now live in an age when the teaching of drawing from life as part of art-school training has been virtually abandoned, the art of botanical drawing and painting keeps alive a rare and disciplined skill. This, therefore, is a timely and beautiful book, which opens a door to its acquisition. As in the case of anyone wishing to acquire such a talent, it calls for patience, discipline and application. For any student it will also have its ups and downs, which is an enlivening part of what is recorded here.

This is a book strong on practicalities and constructive comment. Everything from paper, pencils and paint to the problems of composition are discussed and carefully considered. I cannot recommend this book enough to anyone tempted to try their hand at acquiring this skill. It also works from that wonderful premise, encouragement. Start by reading and studying this publication from start to finish and then, undaunted but under proper instruction and guidance, begin.

Sir Roy Strong

Introduction

This book is based upon the Distance Learning Diploma Course run by the Society of Botanical Artists. The course started as the result of a chance remark by my commissioning editor at Harper Collins, Cathy Gosling, when I completed The Art of Botanical Painting in 2004. Cathy said that it would make a great textbook on which to base a course, so my colleague Pam Henderson and I put our heads together and the first course began in January 2005. Over the course of 27 months, the student is taken through all aspects of botanical art in a series of assignments which are marked by tutors who are all SBA members and experts in their particular field. Currently, 30 tutors mentor approximately 180 students, who come from all over the world.

Mary Ann Scott joined the third course in January 2006. She showed promise in the early assignments but we were not prepared for what was to come. After a tricky patch, during which she could so easily have become disheartened and given up, it was as if a light was switched on. Her marks shot up and by the time we examined her Diploma Portfolio it was obvious that she was genuinely gifted. Her sketchbook was a joy, and special thanks go to Cathy Gosling and publishers Anova for having the vision to put

into print what I hope will inspire others to persevere and draw out their hidden talent.

Margaret Stevens PSBA

Looking back, I can see two threads weaving through my life and gradually coming together. One is my love of painting and the other is my affinity with the natural world, in particular flowers and gardens.

The first thread began to form with the paintboxes and colouring books of my childhood. The second had more recent origins. When I left university I went to live at Benton End in Suffolk, the former home of the influential artist and plantsman Sir Cedric Morris. Sadly, the gardens had become a wilderness after his death, yet many shrubs and resilient perennials had managed to survive. Here I began learning about plants, and I have many memories of that enchanted place.

The threads began to converge when I moved to Denmark and started an apprenticeship at the Royal Copenhagen porcelain factory. I was hoping to join the select group employed in painting the Flora Danica service, and with this in mind I worked hard at home painting flowers and trying to improve my technique. I also began attending evening classes in botanical painting taught by Victoria Friis. Victoria had worked at Kew as a botanical illustrator and was an excellent teacher. We became

friends, and I am grateful to her for gently setting my feet on the path.



B. Sienna
+
Ind. Blue
Olive green
Alizarin

Burnt Sienna
+
W. Violet

B. Sienna
W. Violet
+ N

Alizarin
p. Magenta
scarlet vermillion

Raw Umber
+
Sen. yellow (deep)



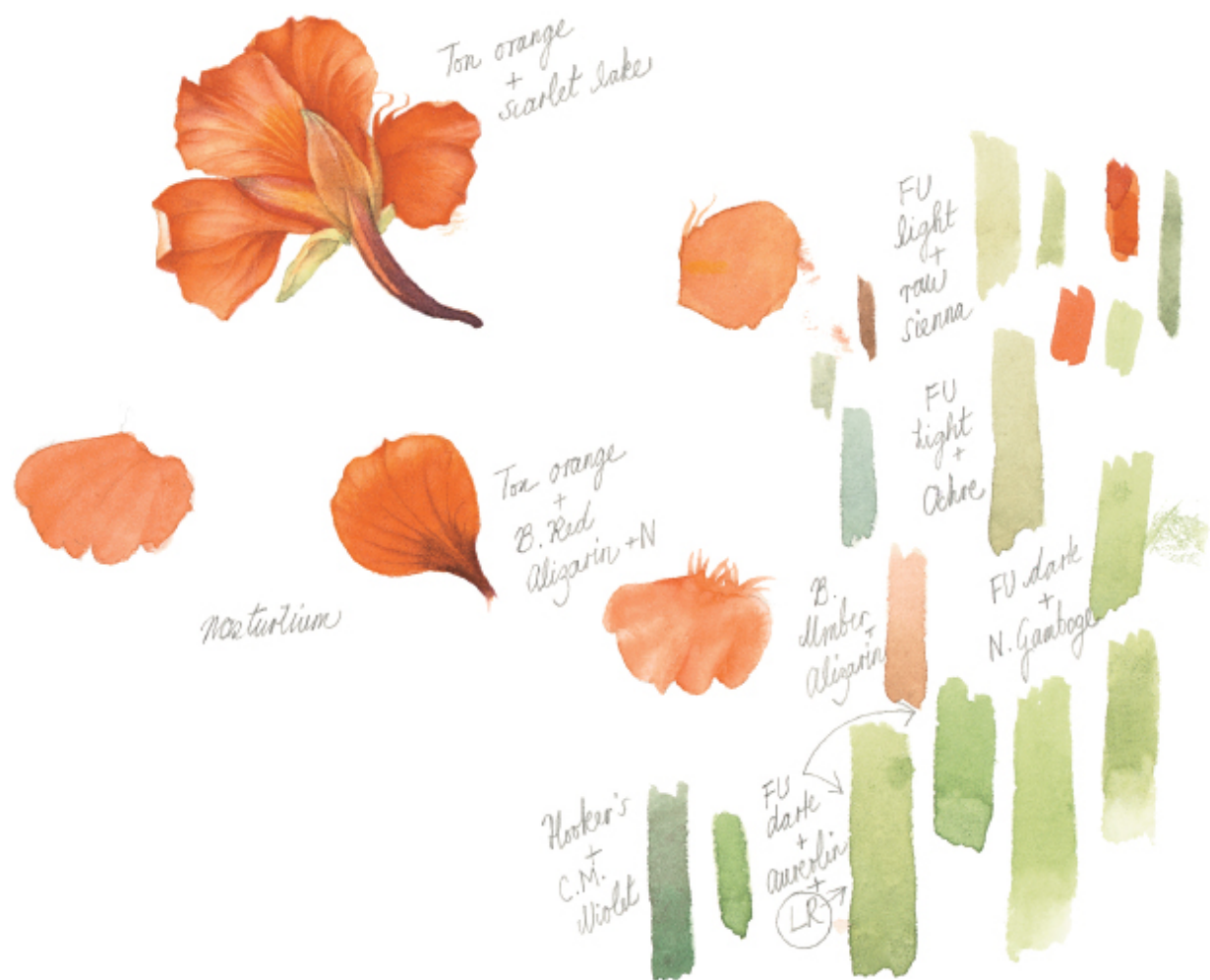


Iris graminea *seedhead*.

I then moved to northern Italy and spent the next few years looking after my two children, working with horses and teaching English. It was only when a series of unfortunate events convinced me to give up riding that botanical painting took precedence again. However, I now felt that I needed to learn how to depict flowers accurately from life rather than copying from photographs, as I had done before. I bought *The Art of Botanical Painting* and read about the Distance Learning Course. My first reaction was to say, ‘I’ll never manage this!’ but my husband was confident that this was the best way forward – so in January 2006 I found myself putting my first assignment into the now familiar brown SBA envelope, my feet set well and truly on the path of botanical painting again.

The course taught me the fundamentals of botanical illustration. It also brought me into contact with many people with whom I could share my enthusiasm for this beautiful art form. At the seminar held halfway through the course I met my fellow students and many of my tutors. Here, for the first time, I met Margaret, and was instantly struck by her extraordinary energy and insight. I will always be grateful for her perspicacity, which helped to create the marvellous experience of turning my sketchbook from a working tool into a book that I hope will encourage other aspiring botanical artists.

Mary Ann Scott



Nasturtium.

ASSIGNMENT 1

Drawing

Margaret Stevens: *A wise student realizes that the first assignment is arguably the most important, whereas a less astute one sees it instead as a chore to be got through quickly. A question such as ‘Do I need to use my “good” paper for this?’ is a sure indicator of the latter attitude, to which my reply is: ‘Drawing is not inferior to painting but its equal.’*

From the elegant 15th-century lily by Leonardo da Vinci to the outstanding contemporary botanical drawing by artists such as Julie Small SBA, there are many examples to prove that a good drawing can be as valuable and sought after as a painting. Moreover, drawing is the foundation on which to build, because it encourages the essential skills of observation and eye-to-hand coordination, and an appreciation of tonal variation.

Mary Ann Scott: For the first assignment we were asked to produce three pieces of work, each demonstrating a different technique. The first was to be a simple line drawing and the second a small study of a single flower with attached leaf and stem, either hatched or stippled, both in either pencil or ink. The third piece was to consist

**of a complete study in pencil of a subject of our choosing,
using the continuous-tone technique.**



Pine cones.

I launched myself into this brimming with confidence. I may not be the best watercolourist, but I knew how to draw – or so I thought! As it turned out, my self-confidence was not wholly warranted, and pride took a fall at this first hurdle. In retrospect, my real regret is that I didn't try harder, especially in the first two pieces. My rather cursory approach to the humble pencil resulted in a wasted opportunity. Since then I've had the chance to look at some striking works in pencil and ink in books and galleries, and my respect for this simple yet beautiful and difficult medium grows constantly.

MATERIALS

Before starting on the suggested exercises I bought a selection of good-quality graphite pencils that would produce a variety of tones ranging from the light grey of 2H to the velvety-black B grades. Paper was more of a problem. Most of the assignment work was carried out on cartridge paper, but I have since found that a sheet of 300gsm (140lb) HP watercolour paper provides a more sympathetic surface. I rest my hand on a scrap of the same paper, which protects my work from smudges, absorbs any grease from my hand and is useful for testing a pencil. I like to sharpen my pencils to a long point with a craft knife.

For taking measurements I prefer to use dividers rather than a ruler, holding them at right angles to my hand and at arm's length.

THE EXERCISES

A series of exercises to improve basic drawing skills was given. The first involved filling small squares with horizontal lines, lifting the pencil at the end of each stroke and using a progression of pencils from H to 2B. Other exercises included cross-hatching with an HB or different combinations of pencil grades, stippling and shading various shapes with the lines following the contours. A useful exercise for practising long, curving lines consisted of starting with the pencil at the bottom of the paper, looking at a point at the top and aiming for it in one smooth action.

TULIP

When I had worked my way through the exercises and felt that I was beginning to develop a feel for the tonal and textural possibilities of my pencils, I decided to make a start on the line drawing. This should show a nice flowing line, so it was important to choose a flower or leaf with simple, sculptural qualities.

I attempted a hellebore leaf and then a pansy, but eventually I settled on the ubiquitous tulip. I tried hard to

make my line ‘flow’, but it seemed to be more of a stutter. Perhaps I needed to practise the long sweeping curves more to relax my arm and produce the confident, clear line the tulip deserved. As my tutor later observed, the result was rather messy, as I had not taken care to erase the construction lines, which gave a ragged look to the drawing. I had taken careful measurements and tried to make an accurate representation, but in doing so I had lost the sense of movement, and the graceful curve of the stem and leaves.



Tulip.

Naples Yellow is a lovely colour to work with. I have three French Ultramarines in my palette, which may sound eccentric, but I find that when mixed with yellow they produce totally different greens. 'FU Light' refers to Sennelier French Ultramarine Light, while 'FU Dark' refers to French Ultramarine Dark.

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For more information about the Distance Learning Course from the Society of Botanical Artists, see www.soc-botanical-artists.org or telephone 01747 825 718.

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