

# THE S.A. BOTANICAL *Artist*

VOLUME 2012 - ISSUE 2

KWAZULU NATAL ISSUE - AUGUST 2012

---

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE BOTANICAL ARTISTS' ASSOCIATION OF SOUTH AFRICA

---



*Sibonelo Chiliza, Strelitzia Nicolai  
Medium graphite HB, H & 3H*

## *In this Issue*

---

- |  |   |        |
|--|---|--------|
| E.E.Galpin, "prince of collectors"                               | <i>by Kate Grieve</i>                                   | page 2 |
| "Commercial and Medicinal Plants of South Africa" postage stamps | <i>by Gillian Condy</i>                                 | page 3 |
| Notices 1: Sarah Simblet to visit South Africa                   |   | page 4 |
| Little Sphaeroid Press, a new-fangled patron of botanical art.   | <i>by Gerhard Marx,<br/>illustrated by Janet Snyman</i> | page 5 |
| Awards   |   | page 6 |
| Trip to Tuscany in Italy to attend a botanical art course        | <i>by Gill Condy</i>                                    | page 7 |
| Notices 1: Open invitation to Durban Girls High                  |   | page 7 |
| Ways of Drawing  | <i>by Jean Powell</i>                                   | page 8 |
-

## *Little Sphaeroid Press, a new-fangled patron of botanical art.*

*by Gerhard Marx and illustrated by Janet Snyman*

There is a saying that goes “growth for the sake of growth is the ideology of the cancer cell”. This very true statement tempts one to make instinctive associations with the World's financial system and associated Ponzi schemes where 'money-making for the sake of money-making' seemed to have been the underlying basis upon which the entire 'collapsing tower' was built. As an artist I could not resist the temptation to measure the applicability of it all to the 20th Century 'art for the sake of art' philosophy that lead to the continuing frenzy of contrived history-making efforts involving a fixation upon 'renewal for the sake of renewal' in fine art, resulting in the chaos of radical gimmickry and superficiality that still seem to be dominating the scene. Art has become such a self-worshipping narcissistic ideology that seems to be distancing itself from the very basic definition that is supposed to form its foundation, which involves truly refined technical skill and craft.

Botanical art, thank heavens, is still one of the few remaining art disciplines that has stayed focused upon its primary goals and is continuing to advance in terms of technical refinement as well as respectful expression of the wonder and beauty of plants. Botanical art has become, more than ever before, a visually nourishing and mind-healing sanctuary. In addition, it is the aesthetical and practical integration of the lyrical and epical, of art and science and outer and inner nature.

The fact that botanical artwork is more than just attractive decorative visual imagery but also communicates an irreplaceably unique scientific connection between nature and human perception and understanding is wonderful. That ensures its survival and secured future amidst and despite the ambient sophistication and powerful impact upon the arts and science by visual technology. Only via the skilled artwork of a sympathetic human can the subtle simplification and explanatory presentation of a plant be as efficiently offered for 'digestion' to the human eye.

However, exhibition and publication opportunities for botanical artists have never been abundant and each new



venue or publication that is open and hospitable towards botanical art needs to be welcomed with great gratitude and encouragement.

One such a noble venture that was launched recently was the Little Sphaeroid Press based in the USA at Oakland in California. Despite being based in the USA, this new publishing enterprise has its main focus upon Southern African succulent flora and work on the first of a series of eight books dealing with South African Mesembs is nearing completion. The author of the entire Mesemb series is Steven Hammer who is well known for his major books on Conophytum and Lithops as well as hundreds of articles in succulent-botanical journals. So far only two South African artists have been contributing artwork towards the first book of the series, dealing with the Titanopsis group : Janet Snyman and myself. However, Little Sphaeroid Press is very keen to include the work of more South African succulent-botanical artists.

To explain the philosophy behind such an exciting and welcome mission I have to quote the words of Dr Russel Wagner, founder of Little Sphaeroid press: “We believe that words matter: history, experience, exploration,



As mentioned above, most admirable of all is that these Little Sphaeroid publications cherish the value of botanical art and plan to have all their publications profusely illustrated not only with photographs but also botanical artwork. Again Dr Wagner should be quoted as he explains their emphasis upon the value of art in botany: “Our books attempt to convey the breadth and beauty of nature's work, but photographs alone are not enough to convey the essence of a plant. Indeed a great many photos are required to explain any single species of mesemb. Yet one expertly crafted painting can capture a plant's spirit; uncluttered by extraneous details. Essentials are enhanced and explicated, the rest discarded.”

botanical adventure join the sphere of our collective knowledge via the printed word. Photos tell only part of the story. A connoisseur values voices of the past and present, the horticulturalists, the explorers, the taxonomists, the unique and iconic personalities that bring life to the story of botanical wonder. Such voices deserve the permanence and solidity of books. And beautifully produced books should be worthy of the intellectual heritage they represent. This is the tradition with which we engage.”

The quality and devotional care that can be expected in these publications can't be explained better than in the painting by Janet Snyman below. Like Little Sphaeroid Press itself, Janet is a fresh new name on the scene that is undoubtedly going to contribute much to enrich the world of botanical art.

To learn more about Little Sphaeroid Press and their plans and activities, visit their web site at <http://www.littlesphaeroid.com/>.

# Awards

Eileen Bass has been awarded Signature Member Status (HS) of the Hilliard Society of Miniaturists in the UK., and took part in the Society's Annual International Miniature Art Exhibition in May/June this year (2012).

She has also received an Honourable Mention at the 20th International Miniature Art Show at Parklane Gallery, Washington, for her drawing of a Baobab Tree, *Adansonia digitata*.

# Awards



*Eileen Bass, Baobab Pencil*