

FOCUS ON INSTITUTIONAL MEMBERS

# Vienna School of Botanical Illustration

GET TOGETHER IN VIENNA

Story by **MARGARETA PERTL** and **SABINE KOCH**  
Series Coordinator **BOBBI ANGELL**



**Margareta Pertl** (left) works on botanical illustrations, focusing mainly on tropical orchids. She holds courses in botanical illustration and was instrumental in forming the Society "Wiener Schule der botanischen Illustration" and initiated the Get Together, which brings together international illustrators meeting in the Botanical Garden of the University of Vienna.

**Sabine Koch** (right) grew up in Hamburg, Germany and studied stage design in Vienna, Austria, working at the University of Vienna since 2003. Her intensive study of botanical illustration led to 2019 Certificate in Botanical Illustration (CBI) at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh and won 2022 Anne Marie Carney Award at the ASBA *Small Works* Exhibition, New York.

We are honored and happy to have joined ASBA as an Institutional Member and are delighted to present the Vienna School of Botanical Illustration and the Botanical Garden of the University of Vienna.

The Vienna School of Botanical Illustration (covering all of Austria) was founded in 2018 with its headquarters at the Botanical Garden in Vienna. Our president, Margareta Pertl, was instrumental in launching the society. In Austria, botanical illustration had fallen more or less into obscurity and Margareta, who has enjoyed international success in this field, was a force in reviving a centuries-old Viennese tradition. She founded the society with like-minded artists with a shared passion for plants and their botanically correct depiction. In honor of the garden's second director, botanist and illustrator Nikolaus Joseph von Jacquin (1727–1817), the society was named the "Vienna School of Botanical Illustration. Since its founding, the membership has grown steadily.

Our workshops and courses aim to intensify the synergy of art and science presented in our publications. With our members, we visit exhibitions, organize tours, and come up with ideas for events and classes. An objective of our group's exhibitions is to present to a wider audience not only the work of our experienced members, but also to that of beginners.

Weather permitting, we hold weekly informal gatherings—*Jour Fixe*—at the Botanical Garden or the nearby Alpine Garden where we study and draw plants. During the winter, our members are invited to join a *Jour Fixe* once a month in the Botanicum learning centre, opened in 2019 in the Botanical Garden.

During coronavirus lockdowns, the *Jour Fixe* group met online, allowing members not based in Vienna to take part. In a dedicated chat-group, work was shared and commented upon. Our chat-group was so successful that we decided to continue both modes—virtual and live—after lockdown. Online courses were organized so that work could be continued at home with encouragement also provided.

To mark the 300th birthday of Nikolaus von Jacquin, who was a significant patron of botanical artists Franz and Ferdinand Bauer, we are planning a comprehensive illustration and exhibition project. Our aim is to produce illustrations of the plants Jacquin brought back to Vienna from his expedition to the Caribbean, some of which are still cultivated in the

Vienna Garden. We will also include plants he named or that were named after him when he was director. A jubilee exhibition of this work will be held in 2027.

Our society and its members take part in exhibitions here and abroad and are in close contact with like-minded societies. Due to our cooperation with *Forum Botanische Kunst* (Botanical Art Forum) in Thüningersheim, Germany, we were able, as an Austrian society, to take part in the 2018 Worldwide Botanical Art Day and will do so again in 2025. Work from our members was also presented at an exhibition of botanical illustration at the 2022 EuroGard congress in Budapest, and was part of the European contribution to TABI 2022 in Melbourne.

Thanks to the committed support of both the director of the Botanical Garden, Dr Michael Kiehn, and the Austrian Zoological-Botanical Society, the Vienna School of Botanical Illustration has become an important contributor to local teaching and learning programs.

Our first week-long Get Together took place in 2019 in cooperation with the Botanical Garden, with members from Austria and abroad taking part. The idea of our Get Together was to do just that—get people interested in botanical art together to learn, appreciate and socialize. It took place in the temperate glasshouse with workshops on illustration techniques and portfolio presentations, plus behind the scenes visits to Viennese museums and archives. It was a huge success, and the demand for a repeat performance soon became clear.

**Botanical Garden of the University of Vienna**  
Rennweg 14 1030 Vienna, Austria  
[botanischergarten.univie.ac.at/](http://botanischergarten.univie.ac.at/)



Our second event, Get Together 2023, took place May 6–4 at the Botanical Garden. The exhibition's theme was *Vom Samen zur Pflanze—Von der Skizze zur Illustration—From Seed to Plant—From Sketch to Illustration*. Sketches, photos, notes, and descriptions explained procedures used in producing watercolor paintings and drawings in ink and pencil. Portfolio presentations by both participating illustrators and our members provided insight into the work involved and full-day workshops took place on weekends and through the week. Excursions to collections not normally open to the public were arranged at the Vienna Natural History Museum, the Austrian National Library, the Graphic Collection at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna, and the library of the Botanical Garden of the University of Vienna. Meeting for cake and coffee or a glass of wine got people socializing, talking about ideas and techniques, and friendships were formed.

For more about the Vienna School of Botanical Illustration, visit [botanische-illustration.at/](http://botanische-illustration.at/) ■



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE, LEFT The main glasshouse at Vienna Botanical Garden being the location for the Get Together. Our group inside the glasshouse where the exhibition and workshops take place, 2023. Viewing nature prints at the Library of the Botanical Garden Vienna, during the Get Together 2023. Mary Dillon leading workshop at the glasshouse, 2023.

OPPOSITE PAGE *Angraecum sequipedale*, Darwin's Orchid, watercolor on paper, Margareta Pertl. Catalogue of our first exhibition, Ger Together 2019.