

May 2024

Thank you for your interest in the Society of Botanical Artists Distance Learning Diploma Course. We have pleasure in enclosing the prospectus which gives a brief outline of the assignments which students will be expected to complete over 27 months, commencing in January 2025.

Before signing up for the course prospective students will be asked to provide a colour print of their work. This will enable us to assess ability, we must stress that this course is for intermediate level botanical painters in watercolour, coloured pencil or gouache, it is not for those who are new to botanical art or at a beginner's level. Students are expected to have some knowledge of fundamental techniques on which to build. We would also like students to tell us if there is any particular artist whose work they admire: this may be an artist whose paintings are familiar from books, the SBA exhibitions or a well-known name from the past such as Redouté, Marianne North or Margaret Mee.

Botanical art means different things to different people but in the widest sense it means the portrayal of growing plant life, encompassing flowers, fruit and all vegetable matter from the tallest redwood tree to the tiniest moss. The division comes when one decides how to portray it. First, we have the most scientific botanical illustration, complete with dissected plant parts, as accurate as it is humanly possible to achieve. This type of study enables the plant to be identified with a high degree of certainty. Next there is plant portraiture, a realistic study of the subject which is intended for more decorative purposes: it is still accurate but without the dissections and scientific angle, it is the type of botanical painting which is so loved by the public and adorns the walls of many homes and public buildings, not to mention greetings cards, china, fabrics etc. Then there is general flower painting which covers work executed in a freer, yet still realistic style. It must be emphasised that this is not an excuse for careless work as there is a wealth of difference. By giving us an idea of the artists and style you admire we can allocate the most appropriate tutors for you and help you to achieve your full potential.

Whatever the aim, from RHS Gold Medal to paintings worthy of exhibition, or even a peaceful therapeutic experience, the building blocks remain the same – a foundation of drawing which requires observation, followed by good painting techniques, composition etc. This is where we can help so why not spend the next 27 months involved in an activity with the prospect of a Diploma at the end of it?

Course Director Simon Williams SBA, 83 Wakely Road, Bear Cross, Bournemouth BH11 9EG, United Kingdom Tel: +44 (0)7931 623173  
Course Administration Claire Ward PSBA, Brynffion, Llanafan, Ceredigion, SY23 4AY, United Kingdom Tel: +44 (0)1974 261401

[www.soc-botanical-artists.org](http://www.soc-botanical-artists.org) • email [courseadmin@soc-botanical-artists.org](mailto:courseadmin@soc-botanical-artists.org) • email [coursedirector@soc-botanical-artists.org](mailto:coursedirector@soc-botanical-artists.org)  
The Society of Botanical Artists Limited, registered in England and Wales No. 5460619, Charity Registration No. 1110869  
Registered Office (no contact): WMT, 2nd Floor, 4 Beaconsfield Road, St Albans, Hertfordshire, AL1 3RD, United Kingdom

After that students will be better equipped to follow the path and style of their dreams, bearing in mind that great painters such as Van Gogh, Picasso and Dali all learnt to paint in a realistic and structured manner before they adopted the styles for which they are best remembered.

All we ask is that if accepted on the course a student will give commitment and dedication; more than 600 graduates from all over the world will tell you it was worth the effort.

The closing date for applications is 30 September 2024 so the application must be received by the Course Director by then. He will acknowledge it and if he feels that, based on the sample, the student would struggle to achieve a pass, he will reply immediately to suggest that the student improves techniques before applying again. The Course Director will put the offer of a place on Course 22 in writing and advise the names of tutors.

We look forward to hearing from you again with the enclosed form, duly completed, with your sample artwork, at which stage we shall be pleased to answer any queries.

We expect the cost of the entire course from January 2025 to June 2027 to be £4,405 for those living in the UK, £4,535 for those living in the EU and £4,680 for those living in the rest of the world (because of the different postage and courier rates).

The course fee includes the student subscription to the Society for the period until graduation. After that there will be a free year of Foundation membership because it is hoped that graduates will use that year to consolidate their learning from the Diploma and use it as an opportunity to consider how they might develop themselves further as an artist, and perhaps apply for Fellow membership of the Society.

For those with a UK bank account, course fees can be paid by a deposit of about a third followed by 18 instalments payable monthly by standing order. For those outside the UK, the whole amount can be paid or an individual arrangement may be negotiated: usually, a deposit of about a third with less frequent instalments because of the higher bank charges.

# *Prospectus*

The following is an outline of the prospectus, the final version for Course 22 will be provided on enrolment.

Twelve assignments, as listed on the next page, will be expected to reach tutors by a due date. A copy of your Tutors Assessment Marks Sheet (TAMS) will be returned with the assignment which will show a mark based on ten key areas of assessment (KAA), together with a written critique giving advice, diagrams and colour notes as necessary.

The brief for all the assignments will always be available but students should consider waiting for the result of the previous assignment and TAMS before proceeding too far in order to take advantage of tutors' comments. This particularly applies to the first five assignments which cover the basic skills needed for successful botanical painting. Students outside the UK will receive a digital copy of their TAMS by email so they will not be held up by postal arrangements. Students are advised to act upon their tutors' advice to amend or re-do part of previous assignments, for their own satisfaction and to aid the learning process. As part of the course, we strongly suggest that students keep up a sketchbook, which will be provided, in which to do exercises, pencil studies, field studies, colour notes and charts. Although it is intended that students work alone on assignments, they can telephone or email their tutors at designated times throughout the course for initial advice or clarification on assignments.

We hope to hold an Introductory meeting in London in January 2025. We understand that in commencing a course of this nature students may feel isolated until the Seminar in the second year, so the Introductory meeting is an opportunity to meet the Course Director, each other and some of the tutors who will give demonstrations in basic skills, practical advice, answer questions and show an array of work by previous students, followed by afternoon tea.

The Seminar for the course will be held in London in 2026, usually in early June during the annual exhibition. This will enable students to meet tutors, show them amended work, look at work by previous students, discuss any individual difficulties, and be shown any procedures or painting techniques which might be helpful.

Students who cannot attend the Introductory meeting or the seminar will not be at a disadvantage but obviously it is hoped that the students will try to attend the events because the opportunity for social contact and discussion will be invaluable.

Tutors are all respected botanical artists and Members of the SBA with many years of experience in a variety of fields ranging from teaching, illustration, botany and commercial design. All have individual CVs available for inspection if requested.

There is a password-protected student area on the Society website which students will have access to whilst they are students and afterwards for the year when they are Foundation members.

# *Assignments*

The following is an outline only of the assignments for the course commencing in January 2025. The final version for Course 22 will be provided upon enrolment.

## **ASSIGNMENT 1 DRAWING**

Due end February 2025

Line and wash drawing in pencil or ink. Single flower study with one leaf in pencil or ink, outlined and stippled. Both subjects of your choice. Complete study in pencil showing tone and texture. Subject of your choice. Suggested exercises.

## **ASSIGNMENT 2 MONOCHROME**

Due mid-April 2025

Two exercises covering shading, layering and blending. Using the knowledge gained produce a small study of a plant or plants, not smaller than A3, using continuous tone. Also, one single flower with attached leaf and stem in pencil or ink, stippled.

## **ASSIGNMENT 3 MIXING GREENS AND PAINTING LEAVES**

Due end June 2025

Make a green colour chart using blues and yellow and proprietary greens mixed with other colours. The main assignment requires you to paint a page of assorted leaves, minimum number seven. Variations and suggestions for this will be given in the individual assignment information. Students may wish to choose the option of completing part of this assignment on Kelmscott vellum.

## **ASSIGNMENT 4 FLOWERHEADS**

Due end August 2025

Exercises: wet on wet, wet on dry, etc. The differences resulting from mixing and layering paint. Paint a page comprising seven flower heads with no more than 6cm of stem, using examples of different shapes and colours. Students may wish to choose the option of completing part of this assignment on Kelmscott vellum.

## **ASSIGNMENT 5 FLOWER STUDY**

Due mid-October 2025

A portrait of one variety of flower. This may be in gouache or pure watercolour.

## **ASSIGNMENT 6 FRUIT, VEGETABLE OR SPICE STUDY**

Due mid December 2025

A portrait of fruit or vegetables with or without dissection. One or more varieties. Textures and reflective highlighting, good contrasts and composition planning will play an important part in this assignment. Fungi are not allowed because they are not classified in the plant kingdom.

### **ASSIGNMENT 7 BOTANY**

Due mid-February 2026

The Botany assignment is to improve your understanding and observations of the subject. Three botanical studies are set as follows: the parts of a flower and how they are put together; a comparison of two leaves; interpreting the structure of a fruit. Understanding the Flower Plants by Anne Bebbington is provided as useful guidance for this assignment.

### **ASSIGNMENT 8 TONAL REFRESHER**

Due end March 2026

Understanding colour and tonal contrasts can be one of the most difficult areas for artists to achieve. This is an opportunity for students to look back over previous assignments but instead of working with graphite, students are to produce a one-colour only study that shows an understanding of light, mid and dark tones.

### **ASSIGNMENT 9 BOTANICAL ILLUSTRATION**

Due end April 2026

This will require a true example of botanical illustration where art and science meet and should include dissection, root or bulb as appropriate.

### **ASSIGNMENT 10 WORKING IN THE FIELD**

Due end June 2026

Use your sketchbook to record specimen information out in the field from a site of your choosing. Use this information to produce your final assignment page showing specimens and habitat example. This assignment can be completed over one or two pages. Examples of your sketchbook research are to be sent in with this assignment work for marking.

### **ASSIGNMENT 11 WORKING FROM PHOTOGRAPHS**

Due end August 2026

A piece of work showing how photographic reference has been of assistance to you. This may take the form of a design using out-of-season subject matter.

### **ASSIGNMENT 12 MIXED FLOWER COMPOSITION**

Due end October 2026

Use a mix of flowers, foliage and berries to create an important, traditional study. This piece prepares you for your final Diploma work portfolio which will be adjudicated by a panel of specialised assessors.

### **DIPLOMA PORTFOLIO: A FOUR-PART SUBMISSION**

Due early March 2027

**Part 1:** a true botanical illustration with dissections etc, for which assignment 9 provided the trial run.

**Part 2:** a study of fruit or vegetables on the lines of assignment 6.

**Part 3:** a mixed study, for which assignment 12 will have provided the trial run **OR** you can choose a subject/topic of your choice.

**Part 4:** during the course, an essay of not more than 2,500 words must be researched and chosen from set subjects, with a minimum of three images, and submitted as part of the Diploma Portfolio. Appropriate allowance will be made for students whose first language is not English as judgement will be made on content and understanding rather than grammar.

## **MODULAR ASSESSMENT**

Assignments will be judged on a modular basis: that means that each assignment will carry ten marks which will count towards the total marks for the Diploma.

|                                  |                              |                          |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Eleven assignments               | 10 marks for each assignment | = 110 marks              |
| Assignment 8                     | 5 marks                      | = 5 marks                |
| Three Diploma portfolio artworks | 25 marks for each part       | = 75 marks               |
| One essay                        | 10 marks                     | = 10 marks               |
|                                  |                              | <b>TOTAL = 200 marks</b> |

Total marks will convert to the percentage which will fit into a final Diploma grade as follows:

|         |             |
|---------|-------------|
| 90–100% | Distinction |
| 80–89%  | Credit      |
| 70–79%  | Higher Pass |
| 60–69%  | Pass        |

This course is highly structured and will require commitment and dedication. We hope students will be rewarded with a great sense of satisfaction on completion.

Details of the Graduation and Awards Ceremony to be held in London in 2027 will be announced towards the end of the course.

Please register an interest in The Society of Botanical Artists Diploma Course 22 to commence in January 2025 by completing the attached form and returning it to the Course Director.

Applications close at the end of September 2024. Applications will be acknowledged, and the firm offer of a place will be made in writing during October 2024.

# Application Form

**PLEASE USE BLACK INK**

Please register an interest in the Society's Distance Learning Diploma Course 22 to commence in January 2025 by completing this form and returning it to the Course Director. Applications close on 30 September 2024. Applications will be acknowledged on receipt, but the firm offer of a place will not be made in writing until October 2024.

|  |
|--|
| Please attach this form to one good copy of your botanical work in the medium you wish to complete the course, about A4 size (297mm x 210mm). The Course Director will contact you if he needs to see further samples. Please do not send original work as it will not be returned. Please write the title of your sample work here and label your work with your name, title, and medium. |
| If you have any questions, please list them here.  |
| Whose botanical work do you admire?  |
| What has inspired you to apply for our course?   |
| Where did you hear about the course?   |
| What medium do you want to work in - Coloured pencil, watercolour or gouache? Are you interested in working on vellum?   |

Please return this form with your sample work to the Course Director, Simon Williams SBA Fellow, Distance Learning Diploma Course 22, 83 Wakely Road, Bear Cross, Bournemouth BH11 9EG, UK. Please PRINT clearly:

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Your FAMILY name (for our formal register)   | Your forenames (for our formal register)     |
| Name you would like us to call you (such as a shortened form or nickname, for your student name badge) | Date of birth (for our demographic research) |
| Email address (please PRINT clearly)   | Please PRINT your email address again        |
| Address:   |  |
| Telephone number(s):   |  |