

DEFINING THE CREATIVE PROCESS

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Summary: Article published in the newsletter of the American Soc. Botanical Artists (ASBA) No.31 - Spring 2004. Defining my creative process to facilitate my teaching methods and to recognize my own approach to painting botanical art works.

The message finally got through to me after teaching numerous groups of eager students – I have to get all these ideas that buzz around in my head when I am drawing and painting into some sort of order. How could I be consistent in presenting my ideas and techniques to those who wished to know more about how I developed a painting when really, truth be known, I had not consciously thought about it myself? My methods I guess had morphed from numerous layers of - experience, intuition or simply by circumstance. And so it was that a seemingly haphazard approach, unconsciously developed over a number of years, finally got organized into a four-stage process that I found useful not only for teaching students at the advanced level but for my own art. I should add here that my approach to botanical art is not what has come to be regarded as the norm. I have never been a student at a botanical art class but rather I gained my knowledge and experience from four years at art school and through my years working as a full time botanical illustrator (working with pen and ink).

Comprehensive printed class notes with references to previous class work at a lower level, as well as practical tips, were provided for my students in Australia and to a lesser degree for master class students here in the States. They have yet to be updated and transposed into American English for issuing as class notes to my students here. A note I include in the preface of these class notes suggests the content may look quite daunting and hardly a text to promote creativity however, the purpose is to offer a structured base from which to explore creative concepts and eventually to develop a personal signature. The information below provides an outline of the contents of the class notes and has been offered with the view that it may be helpful if you are interested in defining your own creative process.

“STAGES TO ASSIST A CREATIVE PROCESS for advanced level students of botanic art”

STAGE I: OBSERVING

FIELD STUDY & COLLECTION (*Taking time to become inspired*)

Field study; Collection methods; Identification process

May include research into formal plant description required for scientific illustration

IN THE STUDIO

Setting up and arrangement of specimens; Photography; Reference drawings including Light & Shade rendering and Color notes.

STAGE 2: COMPOSING

DESIGNING THE COMPOSITION'S MAIN STRUCTURE

Finalizing structural design; Final design review & procedures

MAINTAINING THE FOCAL POINT & ENHANCING THE PERCEPTION OF
A THIRD DIMENSION

Tonal composition; Value Keys

STAGE 3: TRANSFERRING

TRANSFERRING THE DETAILED DRAWING FROM FINAL DESIGN

Outlining; Defining

TRANSFERRING VALUES TO COLOR & PREPARING COLOR MIXES

Color mixing; Color pencil applications (if this particular Saul technique is required); Watercolor wash applications; Re-evaluation

STAGE 4: DETAILING

FURTHER CREATIVE THINKING

Unity – of color; Enhancing focal point – color intensity or textural detail;
Delineating

FINAL DETAILS - Referring back and re-check; Cleaning up; Critique; Storing
art work.