

NUACHTLITIR



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REFLECTION

AGM

Our Annual General Meeting was held once again in the beautiful surroundings of the National Botanic Gardens. Prior to the meeting, copies of **Síolta**, our annual publication, were distributed to all members present. The meeting began with the usual AGM business, including a review of the Society's activities over the past year and the approval of the minutes from AGM 2025 and accounts for 2025.

We are very happy to say that all members of the current committee will be continuing in their roles for another year. We are also delighted to welcome **Noeleen Frain** back to the Committee this year. Over the past year, the Society enjoyed a number of successful events, and it is wonderful to know that the coming year will also be full of workshops, exhibitions and opportunities to meet and learn together.

During the meeting, there was also a thoughtful suggestion that some ISBA members might offer mentorship to fellow members who at times feel a little stuck, uncertain, or in need of encouragement in their botanical art practice. Members may already have seen that **Orla McKeown** and **Susan Sex** have recently scheduled a gathering to support other members in this way. If any other experienced members would like to offer mentoring sessions, the Committee would be very happy to help by sharing the information with members. Likewise, if this is something you would value as a participant, please do get in touch with the Committee.



Following the formal business, we were delighted to welcome our special guest, **Tasneem Khan** — artist, educator, marine social scientist, researcher, ecologist and photographer — who gave a fascinating and inspiring presentation.

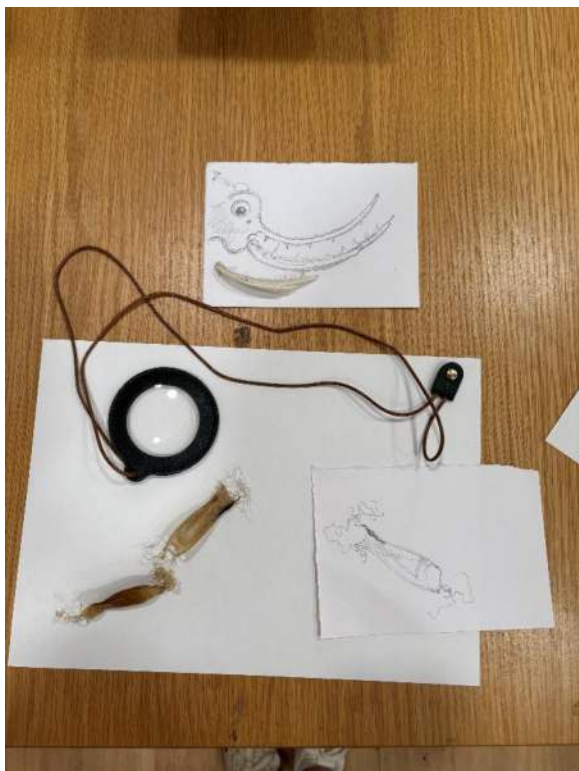
Tasneem began with the number **1.34**, the refractive index of seawater. For artists, she suggested, this can mean shifting perspective and allowing ourselves to see the world differently by looking from the water as well as at it. She showed how, using a special underwater camera housing, she can create photographs taken partially from beneath the surface, offering an unusual and compelling viewpoint.

In this context, she also explained the idea of the **meniscus** — the delicate curved line formed where water meets air. In photographs taken partly underwater, this boundary becomes visible and can create a subtle but striking division between two ways of seeing the same scene. It was a lovely example of how science and observation can deepen an artist's understanding of image-making.

Tasneem described her own practice in three words: **Attention. Translation. Imagination.** This means paying close attention to what captures your interest, translating it into a wider ecological context, and then imagining different realities and possibilities from it.

To conclude her presentation, Tasneem invited members to explore sea materials and other natural treasures with hand microscopes. Members were encouraged to study tiny fragments — such as a jawbone — and imagine, then sketch,

the whole creature from that one small piece. It was a wonderfully engaging exercise in close observation and creative thinking.



Members exploring sea materials and test their creativity

It was a memorable and inspiring end to the AGM, and we are very grateful to Tasneem for sharing her knowledge, insight and generosity with us.

THE IRISH GARDEN MAGAZINE

We are delighted to share that *The Irish Garden* magazine has launched a wonderful new series, **Irish Garden Art**, celebrating Irish artists and makers whose work is inspired by gardens and the natural world. We are especially pleased to congratulate **Mary Dillon**, whose beautiful work was featured as the very first in the series.



This is a lovely opportunity to see botanical and nature-inspired art brought to a wider audience, and we are thrilled to see one of our members leading the way. We would also like to remind all Society members that artwork can still be submitted to the Committee for consideration for future features in *The Irish Garden*.

SVETLANA LANSE WORKSHOP IN BELFAST



Svetlana Lanse demonstrating her technique

Below is the reflection on Svetlana Lanse's workshop in Belfast from Hayley Wylie Thurrat.

On February 7th ISBA members gathered at Queens University, Belfast to participate in a workshop hosted by Svetlana Lanse. It was a great turnout despite the rainy weather and dedicated travel by several members to the university. We were wonderfully rewarded by Svetlana who generously shared her background, technique and knowledge.

Svetlana hails from Saint-Petersburg and initially studied miniature painting, studying folk art, and holds a master's degree. It was during this time she began to study botanicals. The skill she gained from studying miniature painting certainly shows in her botanical illustrations, which are exquisite. We were treated to looking freely at her original artworks which she brought along to the workshop. The smallest of details are precisely painted, and the colour is so rich. It is here that Svetlana opens a whole new world in botanical illustration techniques and oil painting.

Our day began with Svetlana explaining how the paper is prepared and the mediums used to apply the oil in watercolour fashion. The watercolour paper is primed with an acrylic gesso ground to begin with and a pencil sketch can be added before or after. We were kindly given a prepared watercolour page with sketches of berries and nuts, which was our subject of the day. This was excellent to test run the application of the oil and we were then free to add our own sketches

on the same page. Liquin is used to thin the oil paint to a fluid consistency, it took a little while to find the balance, but once achieved it behaves a little thicker than watercolour.

We had a lovely palette with a full range of colours ranging from hot to cold and colour for mixing mid tones. We were also provided with a range of brushes which were small and medium round and flat tipped brushes and a soft, round brush for blending.

Svetlana demonstrated by showing us the initial layer, which involves choosing the correct colour matching and mixing. By gently adding the colour on the page, you will next lightly blend; this requires a very light and deft touch. Once this was achieved, we could then move next into looking at our highlights and shadows. Then finally adding the detail. The room was very studious and engaged throughout the day and Svetlana was an excellent guide, ensuring that she came to speak to all of us during our endeavors.



Hayley Wylie Thurrat – photo from workshop

For me personally, this is a technique that I am very keen to continue. I would paint in oils alongside using watercolour, however my execution of oil paintings is a world away from my illustration in watercolour, but perhaps not so in the future! It was exciting to see oil used in an incredibly delicate way that botanical illustration requires and the depth of colour in Svetlana's work is really something that inspires me and hopefully other members also.

Many thanks to Alison Walker for securing a lovely venue and to Jasmine and Mieke for their joint organizing for the event and to meet and paint with other ISBA members. A very fine day indeed.

Contributed by Hayley Wylie Thurrat.

WEBSITE UPDATE

Our website continues to be an important place for sharing the work and activities of the Society, and we are planning a few further updates over the coming months. In particular, we hope to refresh the Members' Gallery and gradually add more resources and useful information for members. These updates will help make the website a more informative and inspiring space for both members and visitors. We will share more details as this work progresses.

ISBA EXHIBITION 2026 'NÁDÚR - LOOKING CLOSELY'.

Preparations are continuing for our Autumn 2026 ISBA exhibition, and we are pleased to share some new details with members. Following suggestions from members and discussion within the Committee, the title of the exhibition has now been confirmed as **Nádúr – Looking Closely**.

As previously announced, this will be an **open exhibition without formal adjudication**, offering members the opportunity to take part while maintaining the botanical focus and standards of the Society.

At the AGM, we also announced the exhibition sub-committee, who will help guide the planning and organisation of the show: **Lynn Stringer, Mary Dillon, Jennie Castle, Olwyn Burke, Bláthnaid Ní Mhurchú, and Alison Walker**. We are very grateful to them for taking on this important role. We will soon convene the first meeting of the sub-committee, and may also look for some help with individual tasks in the coming months, in the run-up to the exhibition.

The exhibition will take place at **Mayfair Library, Kilkenny City**. Members are reminded that the Committee previously circulated a form to invite expressions of interest. As plans progress, the Committee will also provide further guidance on **scanning and photographing artwork**, as well as on **framing requirements**, to support members in preparing their work for submission.

Last date for expression of interest: 31st May 2026

Last date for acceptance of works: 8th October 2026

Hanging: Monday 23rd November 2026

Exhibition dates: 24th November – 1st December 2026

Take down: Wednesday 2nd December 2026

We look forward to sharing more updates as arrangements continue.

UPCOMING EVENTS

TRIP: ROTHE GARDEN WALK, KILKENNY AND MARY DILLON'S WORKSHOP



We are pleased to confirm details of our upcoming Rothe House Garden Visit and Petals Workshop, which will take place on **27th June in Kilkenny, from 10.15 am to 4.30 pm**. The day will include a visit to Rothe House Garden, where members will enjoy a tour of the medieval garden led by **Head Gardener Mary Pine**, along with some time for sketching in the garden.

Following this, there will be time for lunch before the afternoon workshop in Mayfair Library. **Mary Dillon** will lead a Painting Petals workshop, and members should bring their usual painting supplies. A suggested materials list will be circulated with the workshop details.

The Committee will send a separate note about this event in order to gather a list of participants. We look forward to a lovely day of friendship, sketching and painting together.

EXHIBITION: BORD BIA BLOOM FESTIVAL, MAY 2026

The Bord Bia Bloom Festival returns on **28th May**, bringing with it another exciting holiday weekend in the Phoenix Park. As always, the Botanical and Floral Art Exhibition will be on display in the Phoenix Park Visitor Centre, where visitors can continue to enjoy it for several weeks after Bloom has finished. It promises to be another wonderful celebration of botanical and floral art in a beautiful setting.

EXHIBITION: CLAREGALWAY CASTLE BOTANICAL ART EXPO, JULY 2026



Members may wish to mark their calendars for the **13th Annual Claregalway Castle Botanical Art Expo**, which will take place on **Saturday 4th and Sunday 5th July**, once again in conjunction with the Galway Garden Festival at Claregalway Castle. The exhibition opening will be held on Friday evening, 3rd July, with the guest speaker to be confirmed.

Set in the beautiful surroundings of Claregalway Castle, the exhibition will continue throughout the summer and remain in place until the Autumn Garden Fair on Sunday 6th September. We are also delighted to hear that this year there will once again be a collaboration with the **Connaught Bonsai Group**, whose contribution brought a lovely new dimension to the exhibition last year.

The call-for-entries will be issued at the end of April, with a closing date of Friday 29th May. If anyone is able to offer transportation for paintings from Bloom, please contact Jane Stark at laragan.hall@gmail.com

CONTACTING THE COMMITTEE

We welcome all suggestions for meet-ups, workshops and any other ideas to keep the society relevant to our members. Here are some useful email addresses.

Chair: Mieke Brosnan, general queries and society matters isba.committee@gmail.com

Vice-chair: Olwyn Burke as above, in when chair not available isba.vicechair@gmail.com

Secretary: Jasmine Sarvida-Phelan, membership, registration for events, etc. isba.hon.secretary@gmail.com

Treasurer: Nayana Sandur, payments for membership, workshops, books etc. treasurer.isba00@gmail.com

Communications: Hazel Beehan, publicity for our events, website communicationsisba@gmail.com

Newsletter: Alexandra Simonova, items for newsletter newsletterisba@gmail.com