Visual Art Classes

Course: Drawing to Nature: Vignettes in Scientific Illustration
Program # 3584-20-LSA
5 Tuesdays: January 28-February 25, 2020
6-8:30 pm
Noland Building, Rm. 443, 250 N. Mills St.

Instructor: Jacki Whisenant
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A welcome note from your instructor:

Welcome and thank you for joining us! I am looking forward to sharing some tips and tricks of drawing and painting with an eye toward scientific accuracy and natural history rendering. This can be as detailed or as expressive as you would like – we will look at several techniques that may work differently across various subject types. Drawing bones or insects or rocks or feathers may each benefit from a different use of materials.

The primary purpose of the class is to encounter a wide variety of subjects and materials, to practice and experiment, and enjoy the visual exploration of the natural world! There will be some zoological specimens used for reference which may include animal skeletons and/or taxidermy mounts on one or more of the class days. Other subjects will include entomology (insects), botanical specimens both dried and fresh, and dried corals or other marine invertebrates.

Our learning space is in the UW Zoological Museum classroom: Room 443, on the fourth floor of Noland Hall. When specimens are out, only dry materials can be used, but we will have some partial days where my own collections will be available for reference and we can use watercolors.

The elevator can access every other floor, but it requires a key to get to the fourth floor. I will be waiting on the first floor elevator landing before each class period to provide key access for anyone who would like to use the elevator. If I am not there, I will be back down shortly!

Tips for success:

Start thinking now about interesting things in the natural world or in any area of the sciences that you find intriguing or fascinating. This could be the flight motion pattern of a dragonfly wing, how bones change to support massive animals verses tiny ones, the life cycle of
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microscopic critters that live in moss, the texture of a grain of pollen, etc. Keep a sheet of paper handy to jot down ideas for things you would be interested in drawing, so if you are wondering what to do next, there is a ready-made suggestion list for a new project or sketch.

Be prepared for the “potato” phase – there is always a first layer and sketchy beginning that may feel a little strange and uncomfortable. This is part of every artwork and the best thing to do is keep working through it – it’s all part of exploring and learning. Sometimes it is also good to pause and come back to it after a little while with fresh eyes and hands.

Plan ahead. Click here for Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) to learn about parking, cancellations, and places to shop for art supplies.

Materials Fee: (Fees paid directly to instructor for course materials provided by instructor)

Basic fee: None
Optional materials for purchase: None

Recommended Supplies: (student purchases these for themselves)
These are a sampling of supplies that are used in traditional scientific illustration. Since this is a class for exploring these techniques, I don’t want you to break the bank if you don’t already have some of these materials, so only get a small number of items to try them out before investing a lot of money. If you any questions about materials, please let me know!

• Canson XL Mixed media pad (any size) - or comparable sketchbook of medium to heavy weight paper that is good for a variety of wet and dry media.
• Colored pencil set - should include at least 12 colors
• Technical drawing pens (Pigma Micron pens or similar) Sizes: 0.5, 0.2, 0.05
• Graphite pencils (at least 4B, 2B, HB, H)
• Small paintbrush that will be only used for carbon dust technique (dry)
• Pentel waterbrush or similar (paintbrush with a handle that can be filled with water – this brush changed watercolors for me!)
• Watercolor set with at least 10 colors, any brand that you are comfortable with, or if you are new to watercolors: a Cotman dry pan watercolor is just fine. If you would prefer to work with dry materials only, that is perfectly fine as well
• Ruler
• Scrap paper for working out layouts (several sheets of plain printer paper is fine)
• Erasers: Kneaded eraser, “regular” rubber or vinyl eraser
• Tracing paper for transferring designs and grid/measuring work
If you are wondering about digital techniques in sciart, I would be more than happy to talk about them but do not expect anyone to purchase the software and drawing tablet for that type of artmaking. You are welcome to bring digital supplies if that is a preferred medium for your art.