

Association of Botanical Artists (ABA)

Trustees Annual Report

From the period 30 April 2023 to 30 April 2024

Charity registration number: 1202676

ABA was registered as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) by the Charity Commission for England and Wales on 11 April 2023. The Objects of the CIO are:

- i. The advancement of education and
- ii. The advancement of the arts for the public benefit, in particular, in the techniques, artistic merit and science of botanical art with a view to raising awareness of the environment, biodiversity and conservation of the natural world

1. Objectives and Activities

1.1 Summary of purpose as set out in the governing document.

Association of Botanical Artists (ABA) for everyone - everywhere - every ability

The advancement of education and the advancement of the arts for the public benefit, in particular, in the techniques, artistic merit and science of botanical art with a view to raising awareness of the environment, biodiversity and conservation of the natural world.

1.2. Summary of the main activities in relation to those purposes for the public benefit, in particular, the activities, projects or services identified in the accounts:

- **To educate a wider international audience about the importance and beauty of plants:**

Botanical Art Worldwide (BAWW - 2025):

Taking part in BAWW - 2025 is the special project undertaken by ABA for the period 2023 to 2025, which enables enhanced public engagement (see 'Foster relationships' section below for more details). As part of the ABA's commitment in offering wider public benefit, the activities surrounding BAWW - 2025 are not limited to ABA members, but open to all interested botanical artists. Workshops, seminars and education sessions are free to all. Participating botanical artists do not need to be members of ABA, a separate fee covers submission, framing and administration costs associated with the physical exhibition. The resulting online display and in-person exhibition will be available for all members of the public to see.

- **A focus on scientifically accurate botanical art often with an artistic element influenced by the medium:**

The ABA education team has conducted a number of workshops to aid understanding the botany of specific plant families, how to approach different compositional styles and how to use scale bars. All artworks included in online exhibitions must meet to criteria of 'botanical art', meaning the plant depicted can be identified to species level.

BAWW - 2025 webinars:

Q&A webinar '*Introduction to BAWW - 2025*' (Sept 2023): 558 views on YouTube

Q&A webinar '*What plant?*' (March 2024): 218 views on YouTube

Q&A webinar '*What size?*' (April 2024): Due to be uploaded to YouTube

- **An organisation open to all with no prerequisites for membership:**

ABA membership fee will not be increased for the next 12 month period, to keep the membership as affordable as possible. We also have a reduced rate for students and those on a low income.

See engagement figures for blog posts and exhibitions and social media.

- **Foster relationships with organisations who offer information on plant identification and plant ecology promoting a wider knowledge and enjoyment of the plant kingdom:**

ABA was approached by the American Society of Botanical Artists (ASBA) to coordinate a steering group for British artists from Northern Ireland, England and Wales (Scotland and Ireland have their own steering groups) for the international online and physical exhibition of BAWW - 2025 to take place in May 2025.

The focus will be on the theme of Crop Diversity with the title for the British exhibition: '*Looking Back for our Future*'.

Along with ASBA, ABA is working with the Birmingham Society of Botanical Artists (BSBA), Eden Project Florilegium Society, in collaboration with members of the Society of Botanical Artists (SBA), the Wales Society of Botanical Illustrators (WSBI), Royal Birmingham Society of Artists' gallery (RBSA) and Royal Botanic Gardens Kew (RBG Kew). The steering group, webpages and associated events are being run by ABA, supported by The James and Shirley Sherwood Foundation.

In-person visits:

- RHS Lindley Library, London (Sept 2023)

A curator led visit for 22 members to see original artworks from heritage collections and works by contemporary botanical artists, with a focus on understanding different compositional styles.

Follow up activities included a Zoom workshop for members unable to attend in person, and public online magazine blog article using a selection of RHS images for discussion on composition.

- BAWW - 2025 visit to Centre for Economic Botany at RBG Kew (Dec 2023)
A curator led visit for up to 20 members to see specimens from the economic botany collection housed at Kew, to help ABA members and other interested botanical artists understand what is meant by plants cultivated and maintained for economic purposes, including medicine, food crops, and plants used for traditional crafts.

Follow up activities included a Zoom workshop and a public magazine blog post available to all.

- **Collaborate with members to promote and exhibit their work:**

As an organisation that operates principally online, our digital exhibitions, magazine blog posts, Zoom workshops, YouTube videos and social media presences are essential tools for outreach and collaboration.

Since the first online exhibition in 2019 launched the ABA gallery, to date 11 unique digital exhibitions of members' botanical artwork have been presented. They are all available for public consultation on the ABA website. We launch two online exhibitions per year:

- Spring: free choice of subject, loosely themed
- Winter: specific theme requiring botanical approval

Exhibitions 2023-2024

- May 2023: '*Beauty in the Detail*': 1,335 views (as of Jan 2024)
- December 2023: '*Magic of leaves*': 2,066 views (as of April 2024)
- May 2024: '*Drama*' 90 entries
- Nov 2024: '*Plants for Pollinators*'

Social media engagement (as of April 2024):

- Facebook: 6.2k followers
- Instagram: 5.8k followers

- Twitter: account closed as it was no longer deemed to offer an appropriate audience
- LinkedIn: 231 followers (new account opened in August 2023)

Facebook was ABA's first platform for social media, starting in 2017. Seven years on, it remains the largest audience, with 6.2K followers. The audience is 80% female with an age range of 18-65+ years. Posts are made every Monday with a new seasonal banner selected from the Members' submitted artwork. Further posts each week relate to ABA exhibitions, Member news, BAWW - 2025 and any special requests.

ABA's Instagram was opened in June 2020. With a current audience of 5.8K followers, it is close behind the Facebook audience. Followers range from 18-65+ years in age with the largest two groups being 35-44 years (23.7%) and 45-54 years (23.5%). 84.3% of the followers are female. The top country audiences are United States, 15.6%, UK 13.7% and Australia 4.4%. Currently two posts and two stories are published per week with images from the current exhibition. Other ad-hoc posts and stories are added as needed when the education team publishes an article or there is other news to share. ABA posts on Instagram usually generate around 200-400 likes but we recently had one which generated 1955 'likes'.

1.3.Statement confirming whether the trustees have had regard to the guidance issued by the Charity Commission on public benefit:

The Charity Commission stated that the charitable purpose of ABA must be for public benefit and that any personal benefit around the professional development and membership interests is incidental. (Correspondence JR/5191556/RTN February 2023).

In response, the Trustees ensured that:

- All areas of the ABA website are now publicly accessible. There is not a members' only area.
- All online exhibitions are freely available.
- All member activities are re-presented and made publicly available online at a later date. Publication engagement activities online include: magazine blog posts on visits, exhibition and book reviews and educational articles; and YouTube videos of recorded Zoom workshops and webinars.
- A wide selection of artworks by a large number of members are chosen for promotion of exhibitions and activities on social media. The selection is made by committee to ensure equitable treatment of all artists.

1.4.Statement on contribution made by volunteers:

ABA is run solely by a team of volunteers. There are currently 12 volunteers in a range of positions, from IT and Digital access including exhibitions, to membership secretary, social media engagement, botanical advisors and educational engagement.

Additional committee members were recruited throughout the year, specifically to the education team, which has resulted in an increased output in workshops and magazine blog posts, and increased engagement.

The Trustees have identified a need to increase the number of volunteers across the committees, and the number of Trustees for the charity. Four new team members joined the social media and education teams respectively in 2023, and one volunteer stepped down. A second phase of recruitment has begun, and two new committee members and two Trustees are currently shadowing committee meetings with a view to being co-opted in Summer 2024.

2. Achievements and Performance

2.1 Summary of the main achievements of the charity, identifying the difference the charity's work has made to the circumstances of its beneficiaries and any wider benefits to society as a whole:

The main goal for this year was to gain charitable status for ABA, which was achieved on 11 April 2023. During this process, a number of other administrative and management goals were identified:

- Simplify ABA website
- Develop an administration system for all ABA documents
- Recruit new committee members and volunteers
- Set up a 'special project' to enhance the public benefit offering (BAWW - 2025)
- Continue to grow membership and offer a range of opportunities for engagement

2.2.Achievements against objectives set:

Charitable status

Becoming a charity affords a number of significant benefits to ABA including rigorous organisational administration and reporting, a supporting framework from the Charity Commission and the ability to apply for grants and funding. Within weeks of gaining charitable status, ABA was awarded a grant of £10,000 from The James and Shirley Sherwood Foundation.

Website improvements and Administration database

The ABA website has been simplified for public access, allowing for everyone with an interest in botanical art to see high quality digital exhibitions, information magazine blog posts and links to ABA videos on YouTube, more easily.

In line with data protection requirements, an administrative database, with discreet access and password protection is used for all charity documents, meeting notification and minutes, Zoom links, membership data, exhibition content and planning. All volunteers are required to sign a Non-Disclosure Agreement before attending committee meetings and having access to relevant charity documents.

Membership

ABA has a steadily growing membership, with new members joining on a rolling basis. As of 1 April 2024, there are 321 individual members, from 40 countries across the world. The Trustees recognised that a dedicated international member representative would be beneficial. Two volunteers are currently shadowing the team, prior to joining the committee in a role sharing capacity.

ABA has seen a 28% increase in members from 2023 to 2024:

- April 2023 saw the membership at 250 representing 33 countries.
- April 2024 membership currently stands at 321 representing 40 countries.

Volunteers

The number of volunteers working across the committees has risen from 9 in 2023 to 12 in 2024. See above for more detail on volunteers.

Exhibition engagement

In 2022 the spring online exhibition '*A Botanical Showcase*' featured artwork by 73 members. The following year, '*Magic of Leaves*' saw a significant increase with 102 participating members. Artworks are assessed prior to exhibition to ensure they meet the criteria for botanical artwork and the theme of the current display, and that the image quality is suitable. Therefore, not all submissions are automatically entered for exhibition. The quality of both the artworks and the digital files submitted has increased significantly in the past year.

Magazine blog post engagement

April 2022-April 2023 saw the publication of 10 publicly available blog posts, comprising a mixture of book and exhibition reviews, courses reviews, personal art practice tips and curator led tours. The lowest number of views was 328 and the highest number of views was 780, excluding BAWW - 2025 content. During this

period, average engagement has risen from 600 views per post in the first half of the year, to over 700 views per post in the latter part of the year.

April 2023-April 2024 saw an uplift in ABA's output, to 16 publicly available blog posts. The lowest views were 331, with the highest number of views 836. Average engagement continues to be high with 600-700 views per post.

Two of the most popular posts have been in relation to BAWW - 2025, open to all and reaching all followers including non-ABA members, with 1,028 and 944 views respectively.

Botanical Zoom workshops

Between April 2022 and April 2023, a total of 4 Zoom member workshops were held, each hosting up to 12 members.

Between April 2023 and April 2024, a total of 9 Zoom member workshops were held, each hosting up to 20 members at a time. Three unique sessions were delivered, repeated three times to facilitate engagement from members across the world in different time zones.

- *Compositae* (May 2023, 3 sessions)
- Botany of Leaves (August 2023, 3 sessions)
- Composition (October 2023, 3 sessions)

[Note: The education team and Trustees agreed to increase the number of participants from 12 to 20 for the Zoom botany sessions, to allow for more member engagement.]

Social media

- Facebook: increase from 4.9k followers in January 2023 to 6.2k followers in April 2024
- Instagram: increase from 2.6k in January 2023 to 5.8k followers in April 2024
- Twitter: 1.2k in January 2023, account now closed
- LinkedIn: 231 followers (new account opened in March 2024)

YouTube videos

ABA currently has 5 publicly available videos hosted on YouTube, with further videos to be added shortly. The viewing figures range from an audience of 218 to 1.2k views. To date there have been a total of 4,110 views across all the ABA YouTube videos.

3. Financial review

ABA is in a stable financial position. ABA's principal source of funding is through membership subscriptions and grants. The main risks facing the charity are insufficient volunteers to carry out the work of the charity. As ABA grows there is likely to be an increase in the cost of software licenses and upgrades to systems. The Trustees will also investigate paying for freelance membership secretarial support.

Estimated gross annual income	£8,000
Estimated current annual operating costs:	£2,000
Current account as of 30 April 2024	£30,598
Special project costs held in reserve for BAWW - 2025	£8,598
Estimated total reserve	£20,000

4. Structure, Governance and Management

4.1 Structure

ABA is structured as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) governed by a Constitution. There are currently three Trustees in post responsible for the general control and management of the charity. The Trustees are supported by committees with responsibility for operational matters. All Trustees and committee members are volunteers and give their time without financial remuneration or financial benefit.

4.2 Governance

The current Trustees are:

Dr Elaine Allison (President, Treasurer, membership secretary)

Mrs Charlotte Brooks (Chair)

Mr Martin J. Allen

Trustees can be co-opted by existing Trustees and voted for by members at the AGM. As this is the first year of presenting a Trustees Annual Report and formal AGM, none of the Trustees are stepping down.

Potential Trustees are invited to apply for the role and given access to governance documents relating to the charity's aims and objectives. They are asked to demonstrate relevant experience, skills and interest in the work of the charity and to meet with the Trustees. Suitable candidates are invited to attend committee meetings as observers. They are required to sign a Non-Disclosure Agreement and make known if there is anything in law preventing them from serving as a Trustee. If

all agree they are then proposed as new Trustees at a subsequent Trustees' or committee meeting (whichever is first).

4.3 Management and Risk

The Trustees have identified the risks faced by the charity and worked with the committees to draw up risk assessments under the following areas: Financial, Governance, Legal and Operational. Each document is assessed and reviewed on an annual basis, or as required if a contravention or additional risk is identified. The Trustees are satisfied that the systems in place are robust and allow for them to recognise and act on potential risks. The most significant risk to the charity at present is insufficient volunteers, as committee members and Trustees to carry out its work and grow the organisation. Recruitment of more volunteers is active and ongoing. Two new Trustees are currently being recruited for and the team of committee members has increased over the past year.

5. Reference and Administrative details

Charity Name: Association of Botanical Artists (ABA), formerly known as Association of British Botanical Artists (name changed in 2022)

Charity number: 1202676

Charity's principal address: 15 Rectory Farm Road, Little Wilbraham, Cambridge CB21 5LB

Name and address of accountant: Sharon V. Mulley A.C.A 43-45 High Street, Little Wilbraham Cambridge CB21 5JY

6. Declaration

The Trustees declare that they have approved the Trustees' report above. Signed on behalf of the charity's Trustees.

Signature: 

Name: Charlotte Brooks

Position: Chair of Trustees

Date: 6 May 2024



Association of Botanical artists				1202676		CC16a
Receipts and payments accounts						
For the period from		1.04.2023	To	31.03.2024		

Section A Receipts and payments

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Endowment funds	Total funds	Last year
	to the nearest £	to the nearest £	to the nearest £	to the nearest £	to the nearest £
A1 Receipts					
	6,794	-	-	6,794	5,856
DONATION	10,000	-	-	10,000	-
	- 0	-	-	-	-
	- 0	-	-	-	-
	- 0	-	-	-	-
	- 0	-	-	-	-
	- 0	-	-	-	-
	- 0	-	-	-	-
Sub total(Gross income for AR)	16,794	-	-	16,794	5,856
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).					
	- 0	- 0	- 0	-	
	- 0	- 0	- 0	-	- 0
Sub total	- 0	- 0	- 0	-	- 0
Total receipts	16,794	- 0	- 0	16,794	5,856
A3 Payments					
	2,545	-	-	2,545	1,270
	- 0	-	-	-	-
	- 0	-	-	-	-
	- 0	-	-	-	-
	- 0	-	-	-	-
	- 0	-	-	-	-
	- 0	-	-	-	-
	- 0	-	-	-	-
Sub total	2,545	-	-	2,545	1,270
A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)					
	- 0	- 0	- 0	-	
	- 0	- 0	- 0	-	
Sub total	- 0	- 0	- 0	-	- 0
Total payments	2,545	- 0	- 0	2,545	1,270
Net of receipts/(payments)	14,249	-	-	14,249	4,586
A5 Transfers between funds	- 0	-	-	-	-
A6 Cash funds last year end	15,723	-	-	15,723	11,137
Cash funds this year end	29,972	-	-	29,972	15,723

Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

Categories	Details	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Endowment funds
		to nearest £	to nearest £	to nearest £
B1 Cash funds	NATIONAL WESTMINSTER	29,921	-	-
	PAYPAL	51	-	-
		-	-	-

	Total cash funds	29,972	-	-
	(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))	OK	OK	OK
		Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Endowment funds
	Details	to nearest £	to nearest £	to nearest £
B2 Other monetary assets		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
B3 Investment assets			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
	Details	Fund to which liability relates	Amount due (optional)	When due (optional)
B5 Liabilities			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	
Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees	Signature	Print Name		Date of approval