

American Society  
of  
Botanical Artists

Strategic Plan

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## **Introduction**

This strategic plan has been created for the American Society of Botanical Artists in order to develop a focused direction for the organization. It is intended to be a living document that we hope will continue to evolve through annual review and revision.

This plan was developed by the following committee members: Jan Denton, Susan Fisher, Marilyn Garber, Carol Hamilton, Robin Jess and Lea Rohrbaugh. Input from the 2003 member survey, a 2008 board of directors' survey and advice from many individuals was sought. The committee identified critical issues, strengths and weaknesses, and opportunities and threats prior to developing goals, objectives and strategies.

## **Mission Statement**

The ASBA is a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting public awareness of contemporary botanical art, to honoring its traditions, and to furthering its development.

## **Vision Statement**

The vision of the ASBA is to recognize and encourage the highest standards of botanical art created by its members; to create an awareness of botanical art as a living art form with exhibitions in major museums around the globe; to acknowledge the power of botanical art to communicate the importance of plants to our world whether through conservation, science, horticulture or agriculture; to pass this art form and its techniques on to the next generation of botanical artists; and to expand the vision of botanical art while honoring its rich tradition and history.

## Organization History and Profile

The first meeting of the American Society of Botanical Artists was held November 8 – 9, 1995 at the Hunt Institute of Botanical Documentation, Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Organized by Diane Bouchier, President, and Patricia Kernan, approximately 45 people attended. In its first year there were 218 individual members and 5 institutional memberships.

The 1995 Annual Report states: *The ASBA is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting public awareness of botanical art and to encouraging the development of this continuing art tradition. The botanical art tradition combines art and science. Botanical artists seek to understand the structure of plants and to communicate this knowledge to their audience in an aesthetically pleasing manner. While botanical art encompasses a range of styles, the focus of the ASBA is on work that conforms to the above definition, whether it takes the form of scientific illustration or realistic drawing and painting of botanical subjects.*

The first issue of *The Botanical Artist*, the ASBA newsletter, was published in June 1995. This was an important milestone for the ASBA as it connected botanical artists across the United States and beyond.

It is from this foundation that the ASBA has grown to more than 1,200 individual members with 120 members from 25 foreign countries and 26 institutional memberships in 2008.

The ASBA supports exhibitions, education, information and literature to explain botanical art, presents the genre regularly to the public, and supports botanical artists as they continue to ensure that botanical art is a living art.

Members receive a quarterly 32-page newsletter, containing information on workshops, master classes, exhibitions, exhibition opportunities, botany, book reviews, articles on art and the business of art, and full color reproductions of members' artworks.

An annual meeting and conference is held at various sites throughout the US, featuring portfolio sharing, lectures, and workshops. The ASBA provides awards and recognition to individual artists.

The ASBA reaches out to the public and members alike with its website, featuring a gallery of full color artworks, links, newsletter, calendar and other topics of interest. The Hunt Institute of Botanical Documentation generously hosts and maintains the site.

Membership in the ASBA is open to all individuals and institutions worldwide who are interested in botanical art.

## GOALS AND STRATEGIES

After assessing the threats and opportunities facing the ASBA, the committee identified the critical issues of the organization. From these the following goals were derived:

### Service Oriented Goals:

1. Provide professional fine artists with the educational support that will raise the bar in the pursuit of excellence.
2. Broaden membership base to be more inclusive of other botanical artists and non-artists.
3. Involve a wider range of constituencies and associations to enrich each group by means of sharing and interaction.
4. Make more coordinated use of the Internet for communications, education and exhibitions.
5. Continue to strengthen communication and relationships between members through the newsletter and annual meeting conference.
6. Provide teachers of botanical art with the tools to improve their skills and those of their students.
7. Provide more opportunities for the involvement and enrichment of our student membership base.
8. Address needs of scientific illustrators and make better use of their bridge to the international scientific world.

### Capacity Building Goals:

9. Improve the working methods for the coordination of Board committees and chapters in planning, goal setting and evaluation of programs or activities.
10. Strengthen and stabilize ASBA administrative organization.
11. Identify and secure new and deeper sources of financial support to fund ASBA education and outreach programs.

**Goal I:** Provide professional fine artists with the educational support that will raise the bar in the pursuit of excellence.

**Objective 1:**

Develop programs for professional artists in the area of *education*.

Strategies:

1. Develop a Master Class opportunity for highly experienced professional fine artists to provide continued instruction of the very highest level for a group working at comparable levels of expertise.
2. Provide a seminar forum of invited fine artists to discuss artistic, business and other professional issues of career development in small groups.

**Objective 2:**

Develop programs for professional artists in the area of *exhibition*.

Strategies

1. Place special emphasis on exhibitions themed by subject matter, media, size, etc.
2. Consult with a public relations specialist and begin a modest publicity plan as a vital component in the education of the public in botanical art.
2. Create a task force working toward the long-term goal of launching a permanent gallery of botanical art.
4. Develop a traveling loan exhibition of botanical artwork prints representative of the ASBA that can be exhibited for relatively low cost to schools, libraries and other academic institutions.

**Objective 3:**

Develop programs for professional artists in the area of *evaluation*.

Strategy:

- 1 Create a program of Peer Review and/or Professional Critiques (private one-on-one critiques) for professional artists.

**Goal II: Broaden membership base to be more inclusive of other botanical artists and non-artists.**

**Objective 1.**

Encourage scientific illustrators from the U.S. and abroad to join the ASBA.

Strategy

1. Use personal contacts and e-mails to invite select U.S. and international scientific illustrators to join the ASBA.

**Objective 2.**

Identify and reach out to select institutional organizations to become ASBA members.

Strategy

1. Pursue memberships within such organizations as the Council on Botanical and Horticultural Libraries (CBHL), conservation societies, Garden Club of America, Garden Writers of America, etc.

**Objective 3.**

Establish exchange memberships with international botanical art societies.

Strategy

1. Promote reciprocal memberships between ASBA and other international botanical societies.

**Objective 3.**

Support the formation of new chapters.

Strategies

1. Standardize and simplify the process for new chapter formation, providing a model for writing by-laws and a standard template for reporting chapter dues and membership rosters.

**Objective 4.**

Develop printed ASBA membership promotional materials.

**Strategies**

1. Develop an ASBA poster to be placed in botanical art schools, at exhibitions, and for use by chapters.
2. Develop a multi-purpose, informational brochure that can be used to promote membership.

**Objective 5.**

Support the formation of “Artists Circles” in parts of the country where there are not enough members to form a chapter or where artists are not fully organized to handle the administrative responsibilities of a chapter.

**Strategies**

1. Introduce the concept of “Artist’s Circle” in a future newsletter.
2. Allow individual ASBA members to place ads in the newsletter seeking artists to form a new “Artists Circle.”
3. Provide a regular listing of “Artists Circles” in the newsletter, indicating the areas they serve and the contact person for each “Circle”.

**Goal lii: Involve a wider range of constituencies and associations to enrich each group by means of sharing and interaction.**

**Objective 1.**

Establish a Scientific Advisory Panel within the ASBA with prominent representatives from the scientific community.

Strategies

1. Invite Panel members to speak at Annual Conferences or in conjunction with major exhibitions.
2. Establish a “Code of Conduct” for botanical artists, establishing guidelines for artists who endeavor to find and illustrate plants in the wild.

**Objective 2.**

Establish an ASBA Speakers’ Bureau of members available to give slide lectures or PowerPoint presentations.

Strategy

1. Invite members to join the ASBA Speakers Bureau, listing them on the ASBA website.
3. Arrange for lecture series to be held in conjunction with major exhibitions.

**Objective 3.**

Organize botanical tours before or after Annual Meetings.

Strategy

1. Invite scientists’ panel members to be tour leaders; or involve local scientists/botanists in guiding these tours.

**Objective 4.**

Establish a visual archive of endangered plants on the ASBA’s website.

Strategies

1. Seek support of a collaborating partner, such as the Nature Conservancy or the Center for Plant Conservation.

2. Continue to add images of endangered plants to give the public access to this information via the website or CD.

**Objective 5.**

Create products in cooperation with national non-profit organizations with existing marketing resources, such as the Nature Conservancy, The Garden Conservancy, etc.

Strategy

1. Pursue calendar project produced, marketed and distributed in cooperation with a collaborating non-for-profit.

**Objective 6.**

Explore the long-term possibility of interchanges/exchanges with the Guild of Natural Science Illustrators.

Strategies

1. Provide reciprocal exhibition notices in ASBA and GNSI newsletters.
2. Develop lecture series in conjunction with GNSI.
3. Explore some level of cooperation on future conferences.

**Objective 7.**

Increase the visibility and involvement of ASBA chapters in national affairs and in achieving the goals of the strategic plan.

Strategies

1. Make chapter heads *ex officio* members of the ASBA Board. Invite them to attend the Board meeting at annual conferences.
2. Feature the projects undertaken by ASBA's chapters in a single article in the Newsletter.
3. Encourage chapters to form alliances with Native Plant Societies and other botanical groups.

**Goal iV: To make more coordinated use of the Internet for communications, education and exhibition.**

**Objective 1:**

Provide a more comprehensive website for the membership.

Strategy

1: Expand the website to include a blog spot.

**Goal V: Continue to strengthen communication and relationships among members, through the newsletter and annual conference.**

**Objective 1:**

Begin to recognize varying needs of our diverse and growing membership

Strategies

1. Seek newsletter articles and annual meeting activities with specific appeal to groups that the ASBA seeks to attract, e.g., scientific illustrators, collectors, students, professionals, etc.

**Goal VI: To provide teachers of botanical art with tools to improve their skills and those of their students.**

**Objective 1:**

Include a link on the ASBA website to provide tools, exercises, etc. for instructors

Strategies

- 1: Expand the website to include a page with teaching tools and exercises.
- 2: Create a blog spot where teachers could share their techniques.

**Objective 2:**

Offer courses to teachers during the annual conference.

Strategies

- 1: Provide classes at the annual conference that are geared to teachers seeking tools and exercises for their classes.

**Goal VII: Provide more opportunities for the involvement/enrichment of our student membership base.**

**Objective 1:**

Create tools that can be used to reach and increase number of student members.

Strategies

1. Develop botanical art curriculum that would be available on-line for teachers in elementary and high schools to use in their science and art classes.
2. Offer free curriculum to ASBA members and encourage them to approach schools to teach workshops in their science and art classes.
2. Offer more beginning classes at our ASBA conferences, targeting specific elementary/ high schools/science magnet schools to participate.

**Objective 2:**

1. Assess the need for a distance learning program for ASBA members.

Strategy

- 1: Develop a questionnaire for members and distribute it through the newsletter, on-line, or at ASBA conference.

**Goal VIII: Address needs of scientific illustrators and make better use of their bridge to the international scientific world.**

**Objective 1.**

Begin a dialogue with the scientific community and expose them to ASBA artists.

Strategies

1. Attend regional and national botanical conferences to expose botanists to artists' scientific work.
2. Encourage ASBA members to approach botanists in their regional colleges and universities to partner with them in learning about scientific illustration and providing illustrations.

**Objective 2.**

Educate the public about scientific illustration and how it fits into botanical art and illustration.

Strategy

1. Include scientific illustration as a separate category in each ASBA botanical art exhibition.

**Goal iX: Improve working methods for the coordination of Board, committees and chapters in planning, goal-setting and evaluation of programs or activities.**

**Objective 1:**

Establish *relationships/reporting* among the Board, staff and committees

Strategies

1. Work with Executive Director and President to establish appropriate organizational structure
2. Update organizational chart

**Objective 2:**

Clarify and revise *functions/responsibilities* of Board, staff and committees

Strategies

1. Work with Executive Director and President to update functions of Board, committee and staff
2. Work with committee chairs to update and clarify functions/responsibilities

**Objective 3:**

Determine *communications* needs among Board, staff, committees and chapter

Strategies

1. Distribute updated materials for “Job Descriptions” section of Board binder.
2. Establish simple, standardized reporting format and schedule for reporting plans and evaluations.

**Objective 4:**

Assist Board, staff, committees and chapters to *incorporate the Strategic Plan*.

Strategies

1. Sharing the vision
2. Setting goals
4. Evaluating programs and activities

**Goal X: Strengthen and stabilize ASBA administrative organization.**

**Objective 1:**

Review current salaried positions for ASBA Office staff including Executive Director, Exhibition Coordinator and Administrative Assistant and create new salaried positions including Chief Financial Officer, Development Director, and part-time Annual Meeting Coordinator.

Strategies

1. Update job descriptions and salary ranges for current and future full time staff.
2. Assess the levels of budget and fundraising goals necessary to cover the costs of additional staff and how the necessary resources can be sustained.
3. Seek advice and information from other nonprofits and foundations about how to structure staff increases.

**Goal XI: Identify and secure new and deeper sources of financial support to fund education and outreach programs of the ASBA.**

**Objective 1.**

Pursue collaborations that would be attractive to foundation, corporate and individual donors.

Strategies

1. Offer exhibitions, seminars and educational programs that tie in with the goals of other organizations.
2. Pursue corporate connections where plants are the basis of products such as cosmetics, pharmaceuticals or chemicals.
3. Build on relationships with foundations and others developed through "Losing Paradise" to seek more general support.

**Objective 2:**

Find new sources of financial support for *Losing Paradise* exhibition.

Strategies

1. Identify and compile a list of foundations, corporations and individuals that are likely to be interested in contributing to this new educational program.
2. Work with each exhibition venue to entice maximum financial support in each geographic area.
3. Analyze current financial supporters of ASBA to access institutions and individuals inclined to provide support for "Losing Paradise."

## Appendix I

### CRITICAL ISSUES:

- Identify and secure **new and deeper sources of financial support** to fund education and outreach programs of the ASBA.
- **Broaden membership base** to be more inclusive of other artists and non-artists.
- **Involve a wider range of constituencies and allies** to enrich each group by means of sharing and interaction.
- Provide **professional artists** with the educational support that will raise the bar in the pursuit of excellence.
- Provide **teachers of botanical art** with tools to improve their skills and those of their students.
- Provide more opportunities for the involvement/enrichment of our **student membership** base.
- Address needs of **scientific illustrators** and make better use of their bridge to the scientific world internationally.
- Make better and more coordinated use of the **internet** for communications, education and exhibition.
- Improve working methods for the **coordination of Board, committees and chapters** in planning, goal-setting and evaluation of programs or activities.
- Improve **financial administration** with a program of financial planning and making better use of technology.

## Appendix II

### Strengths & Weaknesses

In this exercise I tried to link strengths and weaknesses as a way of identifying critical issues

Strengths & assets	Weaknesses and liabilities
<i>Education:</i>	<i>Education:</i>
Good support for <i>professional fine artists</i>	Less support for <i>professional scientific illustrators</i>
Chapters educate emerging artists, often in tandem with local bot art programs	Regions w/o chapters support artists, especially beginners, less well
Good/developing support for bot art teachers	More development possible through web directory and recommended basic curriculum
<i>Annual Meeting (combines Ed, Exhibition &amp; community):</i>	<i>Annual Meeting (combines Ed, Exhibition &amp; community):</i>
Strengthens community (fine artists, illustrators, students)	Could be more inclusive of other constituencies (collectors, exhibitors, scientists, international)
Provides educational opportunities	Ditto (as above)
	Travel/time/expense limit member attendance
<i>Exhibition:</i>	<i>Exhibition:</i>
Continued growth in quality/prestige of exhibition venues for professional artists	Not accepted by contemporary art world/venues
	Provide few opportunities for exhibition of scientific illustration
	Not accepting of more experimental bot art
	Less org support of regional/chapter exhibition
Increased sales at high end exhibitions	Universally true? Or just HSNY?
Exhibitions at all levels create public awareness	Publicity not maximized
<i>Communications (newsletter, web, publicity)</i>	<i>Communications (newsletter, web, publicity)</i>
Superb newsletter, always improving	Could broaden base of contributors

Appendix II cont.

Active/developing web site

Evolving technologies require that we do more in this area

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No real Publicity & Public Relations program

*Organizational*

*Organizational*

Committed Board (financial/volunteer)

Have not be able to tap into membership for volunteer body

No financial planning

Organization welcomes all

Perception of elitism?

Annual *Board* Meeting well attended

Annual meeting insufficient to accomplished increasingly sophisticated goals

Distance issues compromise ability to work together during the year

Need new methods of Board/committee/chapter procedure that would allow for better coordination of programs, more communication during the year, better goal setting and evaluation

*Membership:*

*Membership:*

Continued membership growth

Very narrow membership demographic (mid-age, white female)

Not reaching many constituencies, such as, scientists, next generation of artists, men, institutions

Excellent chapter growth

Still many regions not served

Possible insufficient chapter identification with national organization

## appendix III

### Opportunities & Threats

In this exercise, I looked at Opportunities and Threats as they are related to the people and communities we serve; possible competitors or allies; and other major forces (such as economic, cultural, technological) which could influence the future of the organization.

<u>Customers &amp; Other Stakeholders</u>	<u>Competitors &amp; Allies</u>	<u>Economic/Techological Forces</u>
Professional botanical fine artists	GNSI	Topping out membership growth
Professional scientific illustrators	American WC Society	Topping out membership fees
Beginner/Student botanical artists	Colored Pencil Society	Dwindling exhibition dollars
Institutions (educational, botanical, art)	Int'l Societies of BA	Dwindling grant money
Collectors	Scientific Institutions	Web growth
General Public	Horticultural Institutions	Digital growth

#### *Not Being Served:*

Gallery owners

Publishers

Interior designers

Scientists

Garden Clubs

Art students

College illustration students

HS/MS/Elementary programs

## Appendix IV:

### Worksheet: Competitors & Allies

<u>Competitors/Allies</u>	<u>Our relative advantages</u>	<u>Our relative Disadvantages</u>
GNSI	focus on botanical art lower membership dues more exhibition opportunities	less support of professional illustrators no listserv
Media Societies	focus on botanical art acceptance of traditional style	bot art not accepted in the art world less accepting of experimental styles
Int'l Societies	no language barrier no travel barriers no int'l exhibition problems	no medal program
Scientific/Hort Societies	focus on art	provide less scientific support to artists