



Jeanne Holgate  
Paintings & Drawings

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Compiled by John V. Brindle

Hunt Institute  
for Botanical Documentation  
Carnegie-Mellon University  
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania



## FOREWORD

The ability to copy what the eye sees onto a flat surface still remains a basic, though certainly not the only ingredient in an artist's makeup. Skill at copying is indeed essential to a botanical illustrator and not necessarily a hindrance to a botanical artist. Jeanne Holgate's career illustrates the point. Without benefit of formal art training beyond the secondary school level, but through interest in art and native ability, she was able to establish herself early in the field of her choice. She had followed her parents' prudent advice and taken secretarial training, but managed to land her first job in an art school. Examples of student work submitted to her professor employer failed to impress her. She spoke up for herself, was challenged, and submitted a few of her own efforts. With her employer's blessing, a secretarial career was abruptly aborted and an art career launched.

A fortuitous circumstance enabled her to establish herself in a solid position in that new career. The Royal Horticultural Society Orchid Committee employs an official artist to record awarded specimens. Learning that the woman who had held the position some 50 years was retiring, Jeanne Holgate again put herself forward, and soon had the job. Official artist to the Orchid Committee is a very special job indeed. For award-winning orchids, an official record must be made to serve as a standard against which future blooms are compared. Size, shape and color of the flower must be set down exactly life-size with an accuracy that photography cannot provide. The demanding work must be performed by a skilled hand. Jeanne Holgate provided that skilled hand for some 12 years. Working always in daylight to avoid the distortions of artificial light and often under pressure of time, she turned out something over 450 orchid icons. (See Nos. 57 to 66). Such a closely restricted regimen might seem unrelated to creative art, but its demands for intensive scrutiny of subject and absolute accuracy of rendering did serve to implant habits germane to the specialized career of the botanical artist. Jeanne Holgate is by no means the first artist to profit from a period of disciplined apprenticeship.

There were, of course, other advantages arising from the RHS position: the young artist had access to private plant collections, flower shows, commissions, and ample opportunities for exhibiting her work. London itself provides a congenial environment, with its great collections at the British Museum of Natural History, the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew, and the Victoria and Albert Museum all offering collections rich in botanical art & illustration as exemplified by masters of an old and splendid tradition. The Londoner can (and this artist did) see and study originals by the best of them—Ehret, the Bauer brothers, Walter Hood Fitch.

A glance at the listings of exhibitions and awards on page 6, and, more particularly an inspection of the works presented in this exhibition, are proof that Jeanne Holgate neither missed her opportunity nor wasted her time. The careful recorder of orchids has developed into an accomplished plant portraitist whose paintings have won her significant awards and wide recognition.

The flowering of such a career is, of course, a matter of talent and hard work. Another less tangible ingredient is equally important: a sympathetic sensitivity to the world of nature itself, a world vastly larger than that represented by flower shows, award competitions and museums.

For Jeanne Holgate, a London-bred urbanite, a seven-year period of living alone in a remote cottage in the depths of the English countryside was crucial to her life and career. She found (in her own words) "the sheer proximity and weight of nature overwhelming. All the trials of our sophisticated city life were squeezed out . . . During a walk through an early summer beech wood in the twilight I came, suddenly upon towering rocks—dark—primeval—and was stunned by the roar of utter silence." The solitary retreat offered not only personal salvation but a broadening of her field of view and a lasting influence. Her present home at Towson, Maryland is backed up by a large tract of woods and shoreline that still lets her get into the open to watch and feel the changing seasons.

This exhibition contains paintings in gouache (No. 19), in egg tempera (No. 39) and in oils (Nos. 42-44), but Jeanne Holgate works

mainly with transparent water color, the medium traditionally favored by botanical artists. She has described her way of working:

All animal, bird or other "wildlife" subjects are painted from living specimens or, in the case of some insects from museum specimens, *never* from photographs or other illustrations . . . For all flowers and other natural history subjects I use transparent watercolour. In a few instances I have to resort to the use of Chinese white to create a pale area within a dark—such as thin pale stamens in the dark centre of a flower. Having applied the white I then paint in detail with transparent watercolour, thus maintaining the brilliance unique to this medium—in other words the white paint acts as a reflecting surface in the same way as the paper. If the white paint were mixed with the colour (to create opacity) as if gouache was used, then the result of such colour application would result in a "dead" look. *Very* seldom do I scratch out colour. Occasionally I lift colour by the application of water and then blot with a tissue. After one of two preliminary colour washes the rendering of the flowers, leaves, etc., is finished with very small strokes of paint or, sometimes, in a stipple fashion—it depends on the texture of the subject. Pure sable brushes are used from 00-5. A #7 may be used on rare occasions if the wash area is large enough to make this practical. Apart from a few simple lines for composition I draw directly onto the paper without any preparatory sketches or layout . . . Due to the time it takes to paint one bloom I frequently use two or three different flowers before the painting is completed (if they are available!).

A small selection of sketches and unfinished paintings (No. 72) throws light on the Jeanne Holgate manner of working. As for the paintings, they speak for themselves. To a remarkable degree they succeed in transcribing and fixing the elusive quality, the colors, and seemingly the very textures of flowers. The Hunt Institute is proud to present these works for the sheer delight they offer.

John V. Brindle  
Art Curator

#### Chronology:

Born 11 March, 1920 in London (née Jeanne Allen).  
1952-56 Secretarial job at Royal College of Art, London.  
1954-66 Official Artist to Royal Horticultural Society Orchid Committee, London.  
1959-66 Stay at 'Many Waters,' Sussex.  
1963 First trip to United States, to lecture in California.  
1966 Second trip to United States. Lectures at Longwood Gardens; Williamsburg Garden Symposium; Greater New York Orchid Society; Los Angeles County Arboretum; Fifth World Orchid Conference at Long Beach, California.  
September, 1968 - October, 1971 Taught courses in flower portraiture at Longwood Gardens.  
Since 1966—Living and working at Towson, Maryland. Occasional lectures to horticultural groups.

#### Exhibitions:

Tryon Gallery, London; National Arboretum, Washington; Peale Museum, Baltimore; Maryland Federation of Art, Annapolis; County Museum, Los Angeles; Maxwell Gallery, San Francisco; The Incurable Collector, New York; Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation, Pittsburgh.

#### Collections:

Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, The Queen Mother; The Duke of Devonshire; The Royal Horticultural Society; The British Museum; The University of North Carolina; Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation; Other private collections.

#### Publications:

Numerous issues of *The Orchid Review*, 1954-66. Hulton, Paul & Quinn, D. B.—*The American Drawings of John White, 1577-1590* . . . London & Chapel Hill, N.C., British Museum & North Carolina Press, 1964. Portfolio of six plates of orchid hybrids, Sacramento, The Aurora Press, 1963. Portfolio of State Flowers (in process, 1973). Film to be made on this project. Work also reproduced in magazines, calendars, greeting cards, etc.

Except as noted in the catalogue, all artworks in this exhibition are lent by the artist, to whom their copyright is reserved.

The Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation herewith gratefully acknowledges the generous cooperation of the artist and of the many owners who have made works available for this exhibition.

#### CATALOGUE LISTING

Note: Dimensions are cited, height first, then width. They refer to openings in mats or frames.

- 1 Lotus, *Nelumbo lutea* 1971 [cover illustration]  
Watercolor 24½" x 18"
- 2 Azalea, *Rhododendron ponticum* 1965  
Watercolor 10⅝" x 16⅝"  
Lent by Mr. and Mrs. P. L. Porter
- 3 Grapes and roses #1 (Grape 'Muscat of Alexandria'; Rose 'Sterling Silver') 1962  
Watercolor 10" x 14½"
- 4 Grapes and roses #2 (Grape 'Ribier'; Rose 'Ophelia') 1967  
Watercolor 10" x 14¼"
- 5 Peaches 1970  
Watercolor 8" x 13¼"
- 6 Blue Parrot Tulips 1971  
Watercolor 24" x 18¼"
- 7 Cup of Gold, *Solandra Guttata* 1970  
Watercolor 15½" x 19½"
- 8 Rhododendron 'Damozel' 1964  
For *Imperial Typewriter Calendar*, 1965.  
Watercolor 14" x 16"  
Hunt Institute Collection
- 9 Bearded Iris 1971  
Watercolor 26½" x 18"



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- 10 *Magnolia soulangeana* 'Lennei' 1964  
For *Imperial Typewriter Calendar*, 1965.  
Watercolor 15" x 17"  
Lent by Mrs. Amos Hutchins
- 11 Azalea, Knapp Hill seedling [1964]  
For *Imperial Typewriter Calendar*, 1965.  
Watercolor 14" x 16"  
Lent by Mrs. M. L. F. Craig
- 12 Clematis 'Mrs. Cholmondeley' 1962  
Watercolor 23 $\frac{1}{4}$ " x 10 $\frac{7}{8}$ "
- 13 *Magnolia denudata* 1970  
Watercolor 14 $\frac{1}{4}$ " x 19 $\frac{3}{8}$ "
- 14 Rose—'Queen Elizabeth' 1956  
Watercolor 20" x 13 $\frac{1}{2}$ "  
Lent by The Lady Digby

- 15 *Magnolia campbellii* 1965  
Watercolor 22" x 14 $\frac{1}{2}$ "  
Hunt Institute Collection
- 16 Camellia 'Crimson Robe' with Willow, *Salix sachalinensis* 'Sekka'  
1971  
Watercolor 16 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 25"
- 17 *Camellia reticulata* 1962  
Watercolor 12" x 8 $\frac{7}{8}$ "  
Lent by The Duke of Devonshire
- 18 Camellia 'Jupiter' 1962  
Watercolor 12" x 9"  
Lent by The Duke of Devonshire
- 19 Hybrid Lily, hybrid Gladiolus 1955  
Gouache 18" x 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ "
- 20 Rose 'Senator Margaret Chase Smith' 1971  
Watercolor 19 $\frac{1}{4}$ " x 13 $\frac{1}{2}$ "
- 21 Azalea, Knapp Hill seedling with Bumblebee 1963  
Watercolor 9 $\frac{1}{4}$ " x 9"  
Lent by Kenneth W. Sproson
- 22 Field mice with violets and primrose 1964  
For *Woman's Journal Magazine Calendar*, 1964.  
Watercolor 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 7 $\frac{7}{8}$ "
- 23 Water Lilies (*Nymphaea alba*) with frogs 1964  
Watercolor 10 $\frac{5}{8}$ " x 13 $\frac{7}{8}$ "
- 24 Chipmunks 1969  
Watercolor 8 $\frac{7}{8}$ " x 13 $\frac{3}{8}$ "



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- 25 Orchid, *Bulbophyllum frostii* 1957  
Watercolor 4" x 5"
- 26 Apples with Yellow-necked field mice 1960  
Watercolor 10 $\frac{3}{4}$ " x 15 $\frac{1}{8}$ "  
Lent by Mr. Roy Dean Hardy
- 27 Hybrid Chrysanthemum and house wren 1963  
For *Woman's Journal Magazine Calendar*, 1964.  
Watercolor 8 $\frac{1}{4}$ " x 7 $\frac{7}{8}$ "  
Lent by Mr. and Mrs. P. Read
- 28 Harvest mice 1963  
Watercolor 12 $\frac{1}{8}$ " x 4 $\frac{3}{8}$ "
- 29 Orchid, *Jumellea sagittata* 'Master Michael' 1964  
Watercolor 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 19"  
Lent by Mr. Maurice Mason

- 30 Bouquet #1 1955  
Watercolor 14" x 5 $\frac{3}{4}$ "  
Lent by Mr. and Mrs. George H. M. Lawrence
- 31 Bouquet #2 1956  
Watercolor 14" x 5 $\frac{5}{8}$ "  
Lent by Mr. and Mrs. George H. M. Lawrence
- 32 Camellia 'Alba simplex' 1957  
Watercolor 14" x 20 $\frac{1}{4}$ "  
Hunt Institute Collection
- 33 Orchid, *Cymbidium* x *Pearlbel* 1955  
Watercolor 13" x 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ "  
Lent by H. M. Queen Elizabeth, The Queen Mother
- 34 Narcissus 'Matapan', 'Ceylon', 'Kingscourt' 1962  
Watercolor 20 $\frac{3}{4}$ " x 10 $\frac{3}{4}$ "  
Lent by Mrs. Lionel Richardson
- 35 Narcissus 'Salmon Trout', 'Tudor Minstrel', 'Green Island' 1960  
Watercolor 20 $\frac{3}{4}$ " x 10 $\frac{3}{4}$ "  
Lent by Mrs. Lionel Richardson
- 36 Orchid, *Laelia pumila* 'Master Michael' 1963  
Watercolor 14 $\frac{3}{4}$ " x 11 $\frac{3}{4}$ "  
Lent by Mr. Maurice Mason
- 37 Moss Rose, *Rosa centifolia* var. *muscosa* 1965  
Watercolor 13 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 10"  
Lent by The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation
- 38 Rose 'Leander' 1956  
Watercolor 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 6"  
Lent by Mrs. J. E. Allen

- 39 Marsh orchids, *Dactylorhiza* spp. 1965  
Egg tempera 22" x 15"  
Lent by Commander A. Collett
- 40 Japanese Quince, *Chaenomeles lagenaria* 1962  
Watercolor 9" x 14"  
Hunt Institute Collection
- 41 Nepal Azalea, *Rhododendron* sp. 1965  
Watercolor 9¼" x 13½"  
Hunt Institute Collection
- 42 Orchid, *Cymbidium* 1971 (enlarged detail)  
Oil 39⅜" x 23½"
- 43 Century Plant, *Agave americana* 1970  
Oil 19⅜" x 29½"
- 44 Hibiscus 1969 (enlarged detail)  
Oil 29¾" x 29¾"

Suite of twelve paintings of awarded orchids for *A Folio of Orchid Prints*, Sacramento, California, The Aurora Press, 1963  
[6 prints published to date]

- 45 *Phalaenopsis* x *Ann Fisher* 'DeeZee' 1962  
Watercolor 18½" x 12"  
Lent by Mr. Roy Dean Hardy
- 46 *Odontioda* x *Dalmar* 'Lyoth Bacchus' 1962  
Watercolor 18½" x 12"  
Lent by Mr. Roy Dean Hardy
- 47 *Lycaste* x *Balliae* 'Mary Gratrix' 1964  
Watercolor 19" x 12"  
Lent by Mr. Roy Dean Hardy



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- 48 *Paphiopedilum* x *Dione* 'Stonehurst' 1962  
Watercolor 18½" x 12"  
Lent by Mr. Roy Dean Hardy
- 49 *Paphiopedilum* x *Honeygorse* 'Sunshine' 1963  
Watercolor 18½" x 12"  
Lent by Mr. Roy Dean Hardy
- 50 *Miltonia* x *Waterfall* 'Celle' 1961  
Watercolor 18½" x 12"  
Lent by Mr. Roy Dean Hardy
- 51 *Vanda* x *Alexander Bonman* 'Hijo' 1962  
Watercolor 18½" x 12"  
Lent by Mr. Roy Dean Hardy



52 *Cymbidium* x *Marissa* 'Gold Lake' 1963  
Watercolor 19" x 12"  
Lent by Mr. Roy Dean Hardy

53 *Dendrobium* x *Lady Fay* 'Ess' 1964  
Watercolor 19" x 12"  
Lent by Mr. Roy Dean Hardy

54 *Aerides lawrenciae* 1957  
Watercolor 19" x 13½"  
Lent by Mr. Roy Dean Hardy

55 *Cymbidium* x *Nile* 'Emerald' 1961  
Watercolor 19" x 12"  
Lent by Mr. Roy Dean Hardy

56 *Cattleya* x *Gatton Glory* 'Gray's Variety' 1961  
Watercolor 18½" x 12"  
Lent by Mr. Roy Dean Hardy

Suite of ten paintings of awarded orchids [Copies of official Royal Horticultural Society Orchid Committee record paintings]

57 *Cymbidium* x *Artisan* 'Masterpiece' 1966  
Watercolor 7" x 6½"  
Lent by Fred A. Stewart Inc.

58 *Cymbidium* x *Memoria Cyril Strauss* 'Stonehurst' 1963  
Watercolor 6½" x 7"  
Lent by Mr. Robert Strauss

59 *Miltonia* x *Limelight* 'Stonehurst' 1957  
Watercolor 7½" x 6½"  
Lent by Mr. Robert Strauss

60 *Cycnoches chlorochilon* 'Stonehurst' 1956  
Watercolor 7" x 6½"  
Lent by Mr. Robert Strauss

61 *Paphiopedilum* x *Bagley* 'Ambassador' 1963  
Watercolor 8½" x 7"  
Lent by Black & Flory Ltd.

62 *Paphiopedilum* x *Lemora* 'Catkin' 1963  
Watercolor 8" x 6½"  
Lent by McBeans Orchids Ltd.

63 *Paphiopedilum* x *Memoria Jack Dixon* 'Sunlight' 1966  
Watercolor 8" x 6¾"  
Lent by Black & Flory Ltd.

64 *Paphiopedilum* x *Anna Marie* 'Urgency' 1956  
Watercolor 7¾" x 6½"  
Lent by Black & Flory Ltd.

65 *Paphiopedilum* x *Greenstede* 1963  
Watercolor 7" x 6½"  
Lent by Mr. Robert Strauss

66 *Paphiopedilum* x *orchillo* 'Chilton' 1962  
Watercolor 7¾" x 6½"  
Lent by McBeans Orchids Ltd.

67 Indian Woman; Indian in Body Paint 1963  
These facsimile drawings from originals owned by the British Museum, were done for the publication of *The American Drawings of John White, 1577-1590*, published by the British Museum and the University of North Carolina Press, 1964.  
Watercolor 9¼" x 5¼" (woman); 10¼" x 5⅞" (man)

68 Orchid, *Platysteles ornata* (Plant and enlarged details) 1957  
Watercolor 1½" x 2" and 7½" x 5¼"  
Hunt Institute Collection

69 Orchid, *Saccolabium dasypogon* 1957  
Watercolor 5 $\frac{1}{4}$ " x 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ "

70 Orchid, *Physoiphon loddigesii* 1957  
Watercolor 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ "

71 Orchid, *Restrepia sanguinea* 1957  
Watercolor 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ "

72 Preliminary sketches and unfinished paintings  
Various media, various sizes



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