

Portfolio Review
Nature Illustration Certificate Program
Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum Art Institute

The following information is a guide for participants who wish to receive the Certificate of Completion in Nature Illustration. Participants must complete the required course work as outlined in the Art Institute Catalog of Classes. After completing the course work, Certificate candidates will present a Portfolio of finished work for review by a committee as appointed by the Executive Director of the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum.

Please read the guidelines below. Once the requirements have been met you are ready to present your Portfolio for review to the committee.

- () 1. Complete all course work as outlined in the Art Institute Catalog of Classes.
- () 2. Request that a copy of your transcript be submitted for verification in the office of the Art Institute
- () 3. Prepare your artist statement which you will include with your artwork for review.

Now you are ready to submit your Portfolio for review. Tell one of the instructors or call the Art Institute Office to let them know that you would like to have your Portfolio reviewed and you will be added to the list of students attending the Portfolio Review. You will be notified of the dates for the Review.

Guidelines for Preparing Your Portfolio

The Portfolio must include a minimum of five finished nature illustrations related to the Sonoran Desert region. Each plate (illustration) will represent one media of study from the Nature Illustration Certificate Program. Subject matter may vary: mammals, insects, botanicals, fishes, amphibians, etc. You may choose five different subjects or five related subjects. You may choose a theme, such as cacti, agaves or chollas; or the feline family; or raptors, etc. The size of your picture must be no smaller than 9 X 12 inches. 11 X 15 is preferable. A finished illustration will provide information about your subject: which can include but is not limited its natural habitat, or different angles of view (front, back, side) or skeleton, skull, feathers, eggs or other appropriate parts, etc. as part of an informative plate.

Graphite Pencil Piece: This completed picture is to be done only in graphite. It must be labeled appropriately and dated. Spell names, both common and Latin correctly. The name may or may not be incorporated into the illustration area; this is optional. The name can be attached to the back of the image for reference during the review.

- () Ground must be appropriate with no erasures, smudges, bent or torn edges.
- () Drawing information must be accurate including perspective and foreshortening.
- () Form development must be complete with a full value range from light to dark to create understandable contours.
- () Light source must be obvious. Highlights must be appropriate to subject and consistent throughout the work. Cast shadows, if used, are to be accurately portrayed and unobtrusive.
- () Overlap and aerial perspective should be clear and effective.

Colored Pencil Piece: This picture must be done in colored pencil, labeled correctly signed and dated. Names, both common and Latin are correctly spelled. The name may or may not be incorporated into the illustration area; this is optional. The image must include the following techniques.

- () Ground must be appropriate with no erasures, smudges, bent or torn edges.
- () Drawing information must be accurate including perspective and foreshortening.
- () Form development must be complete with a full value range from light to dark, creating understandable contours.
- () Light source must be obvious. Highlights must be appropriate to subject and consistent throughout the work. Cast shadows, if used, are to be accurately portrayed and unobtrusive.
- () Overlap and aerial perspective should be clear and effective.
- () Colors are accurate to subject and demonstrate rich color from layering. Color transitions are smooth.
- () Whites are well managed, reserved or added as required.
- () Glazing, layering and juxtaposition of color must work together to represent form and depth. This should include accurate rendering of overlap and transitions.

Pen & Ink Piece: This image must consist of pen and ink: no other medium can be used. It must be signed and dated with names, both common and Latin to be correctly spelled. The name may or may not be incorporated into the illustration area; this is optional. Please demonstrate the use of two techniques as listed below. The use of ink washes is permissible.

- () Ground must be appropriate with no erasure, smudges, bent or torn edges.
- () Drawing information must be accurate including perspective and foreshortening.
- () Line quality is consistent. Snodgrassing is a weighted line used to indicate which parts of the subject are in front or forward and it should be well managed. Eye lashing is also a weighted line and this technique should also be well managed. These examples show accurate use of line work and thereby demonstrate different types of line; thin, thick, broken or graduated.
- () Accurate use of stipple using appropriate dot size as well as spatial relationships using stipple techniques. Clearly indicate chosen light source, high lights and texture through the use of stipple technique
- () Cross hatching creates form and texture, matched to specimen surface or texture needs.

Watercolor Painting: This painting must be signed and dated. Subject names both common and Latin are correctly spelled. The names may or may not be incorporated into the illustration area; this is optional. Demonstrate a wash technique as well as dry brush and softened edges within the image area.

- () Ground must be appropriate with no erasures, smudges, bent or torn edges.
- () Drawing information must be accurate including perspective and foreshortening
- () Form development must be complete with a full value range from light to dark, in order to create understandable contours.
- () Light source must be obvious. Highlights must be appropriate to specimen and consistent throughout the work. Cast shadows, if used, are to be accurately portrayed.
- () Washes must be smooth and free of tide marks, blooms, “holidays”, smears or brush strokes.
- () Transition and integration of colors should be apparent and well modulated. Over lap and other ways of showing perspective should be clear and effective to indicate front, middle, and back, or aerial perspective with glazes as well as appropriate placement of details.

Student choice: This image, signed, labeled, and dated appropriately can be done in any media or any combination of media that was studied within the curriculum of the Nature Illustration Certificate Program and must meet the same criteria as stated above.

Illustrations may be started in class. A finished plate will demonstrate appropriate composition, scientific and artistic accuracy, and accurate scientific labeling. Incomplete work and “studies” are not acceptable as finished plates. The Portfolio Review is an opportunity to present your highest level of work.

Once your work has met the criteria described above and has been presented to and accepted by the review committee, you will receive your Certificate of Completion in Nature Illustration. It is also possible to enter your work for the review in a digital format. Be prepared to show the original plate if questions should arise about any aspect of your work.

Thank you for your interest in the Nature Illustration Certificate Program.

Susan T. Fisher
Director, Art Institute
Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum
2021 N. Kinney Road
Tucson, Arizona 85743-8918
Office: 520.883.3082
Cell: 520.260.8758
e-mail: sfisher@desertmuseum.org