Graphite is an ideal medium for portraying natural science subjects with a life-like 3-dimensionality. Students will produce arresting portraits by mastering the technique of applying graphite in gradual layers to produce the subtle continuous silver tone seen in old photographs. Botanical and natural science artists since the Renaissance have employed the traditional light source that comes from the upper left to communicate a 3-dimensional work. Students will learn to intuitively light their portraits in this way, freeing them from dependency on an artificial light source in the studio. Scientific journal editors and jurors of botanical art exhibits typically expect this light source to be used by natural science illustrators. As they explore the trails and the beach on the Eagle Hill Reserve, students will discover shells, seed pods, mossy bark, weathered stones, snakeskins, gnarled twigs, flowers, fruits and myriad treasures of nature to illustrate.

About the instructor

Susannah Graedel (Graedelbirdsong@comcast.net) portrays natural science subjects in graphite, ink and color. She studied zoology at the University of Michigan, earned a master’s degree in ecology and evolutionary biology from Rutgers University, and earned a Certificate in Botanical Illustration from the New York Botanical Garden. Her artistic career is an extension of a life spent learning about the natural world and sharing her knowledge and excitement as an environmental educator in New Jersey and Connecticut. Her accurate and aesthetic portrayals of animals and plants have been exhibited in many juried art shows and are in private collections. As a founding faculty member of the Yale Peabody Museum Natural Science Illustration Program, she has taught classes at the museum since 2010. She is a member of the Guild of Natural Science Illustrators and has served on the board of the GNSI Greater New York Chapter for ten years. Susannah is thrilled to be a part of the Eagle Hill seminar series this year.