

HUNTIA

A YEARBOOK OF BOTANICAL AND HORTICULTURAL BIBLIOGRAPHY

VOLUME 1

15 APRIL 1964

THE HUNT BOTANICAL LIBRARY

CARNEGIE INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

PITTSBURGH PENNSYLVANIA

HUNTIA

Copyright © 1964, by The Hunt Botanical Library

HUNTIA is a yearbook devoted to studies of the literature on systematic botany and horticulture, botanical voyages and explorations, early agriculture, medical botany, and the related subjects of botanical biography, iconography, and bibliography.

While HUNTIA serves primarily as a record of investigations at The Hunt Botanical Library, its pages are open also to papers from scholars of other institutions.

Editor: George H. M. Lawrence

Director, The Hunt Botanical Library

Subscription price: \$7.50 (US) a volume.

Communications regarding subscriptions, exchanges and contributions should be addressed to the Editor, Hunt Botanical Library, Carnegie Institute of Technology, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15213.

Program and organization of the collection

John V. Brindle

THIS RICH COLLECTION of botanical paintings, drawings, and prints assembled over the years by Mrs. Roy Arthur Hunt represents a significant component of the great botanical publications that form her library.

William M. Ivins, Jr., in his provocative *Prints and visual communication* (1953) offers a valuable reminder of the extent to which the development of Western science and technology, indeed of Western culture itself, has been dependent on the mastery of techniques of multiple reproduction of accurate illustrative material. Through development of processes which the ancients never knew, Western technology was spurred rapidly ahead by the wide dissemination of faithfully reproduced illustrations to its treatises.

Botanical science provides a good example of the interaction between scientific illustration and progress. The wide distribution of books containing printed representations of plates, based on direct observation, conveyed exact knowledge to an extent never before possible, and gave strong impetus to the study and development of the many classification systems that arose during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The primitive state of botany in the Middle Ages is clearly reflected in the innumerable plant illustrations to be seen in early herbals, illustrations which had their remote origins in the naturalistic paintings of classical antiquity, as transmitted through the monumental *De materia medica* of Dioscorides, a work of the first century A.D. which survives in the famous sixth century manuscript known as the *Juliana Anicia Codex* in Vienna.

The process of copying and recopying, without resource to direct observation of the plants themselves, continued throughout the centuries of the Dark Ages and of the Middle Ages with deadening effect, until images of the plants, as seen, for instance, in some of the early printed herbals (e.g., *Hortus sanitatis*), were mere decorative embellishments of the text with little usefulness for study or identification.

With the sixteenth century development of book printing, and of wood-cut illustrations, a fresh start in plant observation and representation was

made. The pivotal position is held by Otto Brunfels' *Herbarum vivae eicones* (1530) illustrated with vigorous woodcuts by Hans Weiditz, an associate of Dürer. Weiditz took his inspiration from Nature, used his own eyes and drew with great precision, setting a new high standard for plant illustration. Subsequent progress through the following centuries was accompanied and spurred forward by the proliferation of print-making processes. It is improbable that this progress could have been so steady or so rapid without the means of disseminating knowledge by graphic representation.

The Hunt collection of illustrations removed from their textural environment affords the opportunity of studying plant portraiture as a field in its own right. Of first importance, of course, are the original drawings and paintings, of which the collection holds some 4,200 examples. Mrs. Hunt had as her goal the acquisition of at least one original work by the illustrator of every important book in her library. Fulfillment of such a goal was, obviously, impossible. Nevertheless the present holdings of original works of the nineteenth century and earlier is impressive. The most brilliant period, that of around 1800, is represented by works of such artists as Gerard van Spaendonck, Pierre-Joseph Redouté, Pancrace Bessa, and Jean-Louis Prévost. The works of other men prominent in the field are present: Jean Théodore de Bry, Nicolas Robert, Jacob van Huysum, and George Dionys Ehret, to name only those of earlier periods.

Those paintings and drawings that are recognized as the originals on which particular printed plates are based are especially valuable for purposes of comparison. Redouté's water colors afford several examples, and it can be seen to what degree his intent and style are realized in the color-printed and hand retouched stipple engravings of *Les roses*, for instance. But the comparison is instructive, whether we consider work from the early nineteenth century or paintings and drawings reproduced by twentieth century photomechanical processes.

A special category of original works in this collection is formed by unpublished drawings, paintings, sketches, and studies which are contained in bound albums, but which cannot be treated as books. Altogether, some 3,700 single sheet items are contained in 55 albums. Here are included carefully drawn plant portraits and studies by such botanists as—Poiret, Happé, and John Lindley, and collected paintings of such prominent artists as Pieter van Loo, Mrs. Bury, and John Edwards. As is inevitable, there are also present some of the nineteenth century albums of wildflower paintings produced with sentimental fervor, and occasionally a degree of skill, by ladies of gentility (often of unknown identity) engaged in a then fashionable pastime.



Fig. 17. Joseph Domjan. Woodcut. 1958. Artist's proof in monochrome. Original 14" x 21".

Fig. 18. Elfriede Abbe. Wood engraving. *Arbutus unedo*. 1962. Original 8" x 10". [In, Abbe, Elfriede, *The plants of Virgil's Georgics*. Cornell Univ. Press, 1964. Original wood block and engraving at Hunt Botanical Library.]



Among the original drawings and paintings in this collection is a considerable body of works to which neither an artist's name nor that of a publication can, at present, be assigned. Mrs. Hunt collected, not solely to fill out name lists, but to acquire beautiful examples of plant portraiture. The presence of such items in the collection provides a challenging and tantalizing body of material for research. Comparison of style, investigation of paper, and study of medium and subject are some of the factors to be considered in the effort to assign names and establish relationships. Apart from research possibilities, this category offers many examples of beautiful plant portraiture to be enjoyed and displayed.

The last three years have witnessed a considerable growth in this collection of original works, and a crystallizing of policy on the acquisition of additional materials. Works of artists and illustrators whose active periods were prior to the twentieth century, and who are not now represented, will continue to be sought. Emphasis, however, is now placed on the acquisition of examples produced in the present century. This library's 1964 Spring Exhibition, *Contemporary botanical art and illustration*, presenting the work of nearly seventy persons, amply demonstrates that photography has by no means entirely displaced the hand-produced illustration as an important link in botanical and horticultural book production, nor has it by any means displaced the artist whose brush depicts the world of plants and flowers (see Figs. 17-20). The decision to concentrate on contemporary botanical art and illustration provides a countermeasure to a growing concern for the fact that much of the original work serving the needs of today's publications is not being preserved for tomorrow's study or enjoyment. Publishers and authors who no longer have use for the original art work reproduced in their publications are urged to deposit it in a central archive, such as this library affords, rather than to treat it as something that, having served its purpose, is to be discarded.

Prints, produced for the most part as plates of books, make up, roughly one-third of the entire collection. The full range of graphic media is represented, from woodcuts and lithographs to the modern photomechanical processes. These plates, later removed and treated as prints, have often come from works that were published unbound, in paper wrappers, as parts or fascicles of the whole, and sold by subscription. Early in the production of the books for which they were intended, they found their way into the hands of dealers and print collectors. Others, one fears, have later been removed from bound volumes by dealers hungry for the higher profits to be realized by separate sale of these illustrations as prints. The practice is to be deplored as one which spoils the integrity of the publica-

tion, but it may, on occasion, have a happy outcome, as when a print of this origin comes to a collection such as this and is available to scholars and admirers of the future. However acquired, the prints in this collection are now available for study and exhibition, and may be closely inspected and readily compared in a manner that could not have been done with facility had they remained in bound volumes.

In the print category, as in that of drawings and paintings, new acquisitions are being made. Here, too, emphasis is on contemporary work. The wholesome modern trend whereby the artist does his own printing is richly exemplified in the above-mentioned exhibition by such artists as Elfriede Abbe, Joseph Domjan, and Henry Evans.

To be of greatest usefulness to scholar, artist, and student, and casual consultant, this collection must be developed into a comprehensive assemblage of materials that will exemplify the entire history of the development of botanical art and illustration in all its forms. Privately assembled, the collection reflects as it should the personal tastes of Mrs. Hunt. As can be understood, it falls short of completeness; it has gaps to be filled in various ways. Purchases of selected original paintings, drawings, and of prints, continues, with priority given to examples by artists (contemporary, as well as of the past) known for their illustrations in published works, or that are reproduced for distribution.

It is recognized that original works of some artists may never be acquired, particularly of the more prominent ones of the past. These works are to be found primarily in public collections and rarely come on the market. Nonetheless, the goal remains. Meanwhile, reproductions of them will be sought. As a long-term project, it is proposed to make photographic records of the most important of florilegia, and of other collections of original flower paintings and drawings in the world's various museums and libraries. It is our hope that we may assemble at the Hunt Botanical Library a collection of photographic representations from the scattered treasuries of plant portraiture. Among those to be considered are the volumes of *vélins* at the Bibliothèque Centrale of the Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle, and the volume of Rabel drawings at the Bibliothèque Nationale, both in Paris. Other examples are the collections of drawings by Ehret and the Bauer brothers at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, and at both the British Museum (Natural History) and the Victoria and Albert Museum, in London. Such an assemblage would become the world's only single source of collected examples covering the entire field of botanical painting.

To fill out, and to provide for continuity and flexibility to the display potentials of the Hunt collection, the addition of full size photographs of

representative examples from all periods and schools of plant portraiture, including book illustrations and prints, as well as drawings and paintings, is now in progress. These will serve to amplify our exhibitions of some subjects now inadequately represented. Similarly, and with emphasis on the florilegia and other collections of original unpublished drawings and paintings, a file of color transparencies will be formed to serve as study material and for lecture illustrations.

ORGANIZATION

The paintings, drawings, and prints of this collection are organized to facilitate storage, display, and study under sound conservation conditions. Since the material varies greatly in size, it is divided for storage purposes into six size categories, listed below with their letter designations. [Note: the letters serve also as prefixes to the call numbers on the catalogue cards. See Fig. 19.]

PREFIX	SIZE
e	up to $10\frac{1}{2}'' \times 7\frac{1}{2}''$
E	$18'' \times 12\frac{1}{2}''$
S	$19\frac{1}{4}'' \times 14\frac{1}{4}''$
M	$22'' \times 16''$
L	$27'' \times 20''$
X	$34'' \times 26''$

Items in categories e and E are stored in envelopes fabricated in our studio and consisting of a clear, 5-mil thick cellulose acetate facing, and a backing of W & A All-Rag Mounting Board,¹ taped on three sides with 3-M Scotch Brand acetate fiber tape No. 750. The envelopes are filed edgewise in steel filing cabinets (legal- and super-sized drawers). The materials in categories S, M, L, and X are matted according to standard museum practice, *i.e.*, are hinged with a long-fibre, lightweight Japanese paper (SEKISHU), using a flour or starch paste, to two- or four-ply W & A All-Rag Mounting Board, and are faced by a mat cut from similar material with aperture to accommodate the subject. Protection of the surface of matted items is afforded by a 3-mil thick clear cellulose acetate sheet, which also permits inspection without undue handling. Mat sizes S, M, and L are filed in dust-proof Solander print boxes,² that are shelved flat. These boxes ($2\frac{1}{2}''$ deep, with capacity for 15 to 25 matted items) have double, or break-away, stout fabric hinges on one side, which permits the box to be opened flat, and the

¹ Available from Andrews-Nelson-Whitehead, Inc., 7 Laight Street, New York 13, New York.

² Obtainable in an assortment of sizes (as "Print Boxes") from Spink & Gaborc, 26 East 13th Street, New York 3, N. Y.

matted prints or drawings to be easily removed. Items of category X are filed flat in large steel map-drawers. All material is stored at a uniform temperature of 70°F, and a relative humidity of 50 to 55 percent.

Paintings, drawings, and prints are exhibited in their storage mats, in aluminum frames of special design, matched in size to accommodate the standard mats. Display material is thus readily interchanged and one exhibition may be quickly replaced by another. These frames consist of protective glass permanently caulked (with a synthetic rubber compound) into a slender extruded moulding of aluminum that has been given a Duranodic bronze-simulating finish to match this library's bookcase grillwork, and walnut wall-panel dividers. Unobtrusive in themselves, the frames are suitable for the wide variety of material in the collection. Framed pictures are hung on threaded lugs screwed into the bronze-finished aluminum vertical wall-panel dividers that extend from floor to ceiling and which are twenty-eight inches apart throughout the walnut panelled areas of the library.

The specialized character of this collection has dictated that the classification of the material be equally specialized; a classification related to the use made of the components. This collection is a topical one, whose subject is plants in a variety of presentations. It is a unit in an institution whose primary research emphasis is on the literature of botany and horticulture. For this reason the classification system has been designed to make the

REDOUTÉ
M 101

Redouté, Pierre-Joseph

Subj: *Hosta ventricosa*. [Blue Plantain-
lily].

Medium: Stipple engraving printed in color
and finished by hand.

Size: PM 270 x 210 mm.

Sheet: 341 x 246 mm.

Pl. from Redouté's Choix des plus belles fleurs ... et de quelques branches des plus beaux fruits ..., Paris, 1827 [-1833]. Large 4to and folio (34 x 24 1/2 cm). 144 unnumbered plates issued in 36 parts, in wrappers. Text by A. Guillemain (1833).

BC "Hemerocallis Caerulea." BL "P. J. Redouté".

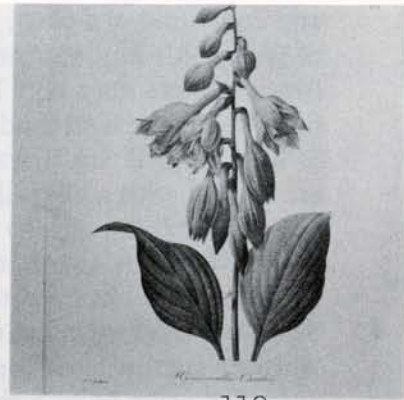


Fig. 19. Example of catalogue card as prepared for each print and drawing. [Note: call number at upper left; accession number beneath the photograph. PM print mark, Pl. plate; BC bottom center; BL bottom left.]

material most readily available to the library staff and visiting scholars, whose need is to know what works we have by a particular artist, of a particular plant, from a particular publication, or of a particular period. Original works and prints are combined in a single system. They are, for practical purposes, first separated by size. Those within each size category are grouped in one of four broad subject divisions: plants, horticulture, symbolism and decoration. Within these, each item is filed alphabetically by artist's name. Further subdivision among the works of one artist provides for an alphabetic arrangement by the Latin name of the plant (when of a single genus), or by other appropriate headings when not of plant portraits. Preparation of a conventional card catalogue, with requisite subject entries for cross-referencing, is in process. The cards are of 4" x 6" double weight photographic printing paper. In the upper right corner of each is a black and white contact print of a 2" x 2" photograph of the item. This affords a quick convenient view of the subject, with all relevant information typed on the same card (see Fig. 21). This card file makes it unnecessary for the casual inquirer or staff member to handle unnecessarily the originals or the prints themselves. When a particular item is wanted from storage, the call number indicates its proper location.

The catalogue card contains only that information required for ordinary use. More complete data are kept on catalogue data sheets, which provide a complete record of all information considered important for each item in the collection. This includes data about condition, source, cost, and provenance, as well as bibliographic references to publications in which the items either reproduced or are accounted for. Finally, a file of biographical data sheets records pertinent data about individual artists and engravers.