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## Flowers: Rare Books and Prints

Toon, Marcy

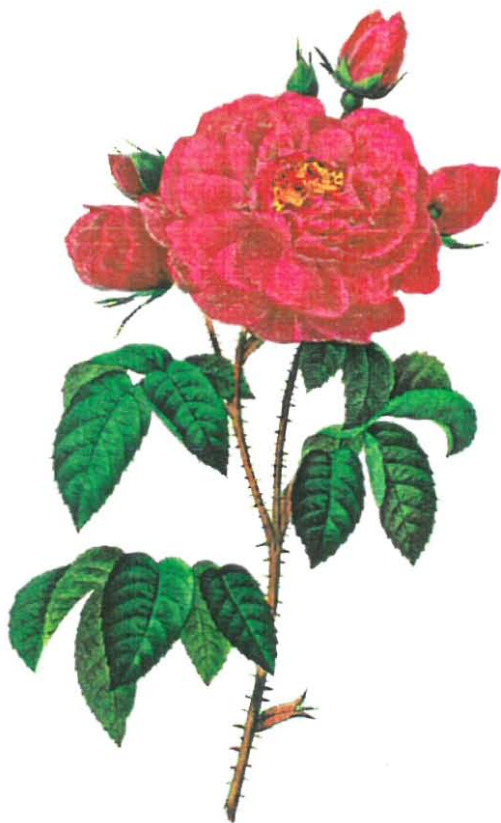
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Flowers:  
Rare Books and Prints



May 3 - August 31, 2000

*Flowers: Rare  
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## INTRODUCTION

Although this exhibit has bookends showing one great achievement of the early 17<sup>th</sup> century and another of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century in the realm of flower books, its primary focus is on the richest era for this genre—the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The earliest books containing illustrations of flowers were herbals, that is, books about plants useful for medicinal purposes, appearing in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. The illustrations in this period were usually woodcuts. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries interest grew in ornamental flowers and gardening in general, simultaneous with the widespread use of engraved metal plates for much finer and more elaborate illustrations in books. Thus, the age of the Great Flower Books was also the age of the Great Plate Books. Most color illustrations from this period were achieved by hand-coloring individual copies after printing, but there were also a few experiments with color printing. Some flower books came from a scientific lineage, and were part of the attempts to describe, classify, and illustrate the whole of the natural world. These books naturally placed a premium on the accuracy of their illustrations, whether they were documenting the plants in their own neighborhood or from the other side of the world.

This exhibit is a revised version of earlier exhibits on flowers, curated by Kathryn Beam, Mary Ann Sellers, and Karla Vandersypen. Additional text was provided by Peggy Daub. Mark Chaffee, Kathleen Dow, James Fox, and Veronica Woolridge also provided valuable assistance for this exhibit.

Marcy Toon, Curator

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## Case 1

**Besler, Basilius, 1561-1629.**

*Hortus eystettensis* . . . [Nürnberg], 1613. 2 vols.

*Hortus eystettensis*, or “The Garden of Eichstätt,” is one of the greatest flower books ever produced and the earliest pictorial record of plants in a single garden. The 367 engraved plates illustrate more than 1000 species of plants from the elaborate garden of the Prince-Bishop of Eichstätt, Germany, a display of all the shrubs and flowering plants known to Europeans at that time.

Botanist and apothecary Basilius Besler helped develop the garden, and then was commissioned to record it for posterity in this book. Besler created drawings for some 16 years, and six skilled engravers turned them into these life-sized prints. Most copies of the book remained uncolored, but the University of Michigan copy is one of the five known to be beautifully hand-colored. The coloring for our copy was apparently commissioned by its first owners, Albert and Isabella de Brabant, rulers of the Spanish Netherlands (Belgium) from 1598 to 1633.

## Case 2

**Redouté, Pierre Joseph, 1759-1840.**

*Les roses*. Paris: C. L. F. Panckoucke, 1824-26.  
2 vols.

Redouté was one of the greatest botanical artists of the 18th and 19th centuries, and to many people the best known of all flower painters, being referred to in France as “the Raphael of flowers.” Early on he obtained the position of Draughtsman to the Cabinet of Marie-Antoinette, and later made drawings for Josephine Bonaparte, a gardening enthusiast, of all the rare plants in her garden at Malmaison. To this period belongs the famous *Les roses* (1817-24), first published in three folio

volumes. Redouté drawings were transferred to the copper plates by stipple engraving, a process he came upon in England where it was generally used for portraits, but seldom for botanical illustration. It is said that few of Redouté's roses could be readily obtained today. On display is vol. 1 of the two-volume octavo edition, published in 1824-26 in forty parts.

**Redouté, Pierre Joseph, 1759-1840.**

*A Redouté Treasury.* New York: Vendome Press, 1986.

Unlike the other great flower painters, most of Redouté's works were studies in watercolor intended to illustrate books. His most ambitious publication was *Les Liliacées*, published in Paris in 80 installments, 1802-1816, with 487 plates. Publication was limited to 200 copies.

Josephine Bonaparte's support for Redouté included purchasing his original watercolor drawings on vellum for *Les Liliacées*. This set of 468 drawings (lacking only 19 drawings of the original complete set) descended as an heirloom in her family until the 1930s. On November 20, 1985, they were sold at auction by Sotheby's, New York, for \$5.5 million for the set, and subsequently dispersed among many collectors.

*Les Liliacées* has never been reproduced in its entirety. However, *A Redouté Treasury* reproduces the 468 original drawings on vellum.

**Meerburgh, Nicolaas, fl. 1775-1789.**

*Plantae rariores vivis coloribus.* Leiden: J. Meerburg, 1789.

Meerburgh was gardener at the University of Leiden in the Netherlands. Displayed is a work consisting of fifty-five engraved plates, hand-colored, containing illustrations and descriptions of butterflies as well as plants.

### Case 3

**London. Society of Gardeners.**

*Catalogus plantarum . . . A Catalogue of Trees, Shrubs, Plants, and Flowers, both Exotic and Domestic, which are Propagated for Sale, in the Gardens near London.* London, 1730.

This Society of Gardeners in London was founded in about 1725 and consisted of twenty men (named at the end of the Preface) when they published this book in 1730. The book reflects the general rise in interest in gardening at the time (including the founding of Kew Gardens, also in 1730), and is notable in two ways: it is one of the first attempts to establish a nomenclature for plants and one of the earliest flower books to contain plates printed in color. Seven mezzotints were printed in color at one impression, and fourteen engravings colored by hand in the usual manner. The drawings were by Jacob van Huysum (1687-1746), brother of the famous Dutch artist Jan van Huysum who has been referred to as the most successful flower painter in history.

**Hale, Thomas, gardener.**

*Eden: or, A Compleat Body of Gardening.* London: Printed for T. Osborne [etc.], 1757.

"Compiled and Digested from the Papers of the late celebrated Mr. Hale," English horticulture writer. Often assigned to John Hill (1716/17-1775), an English botanical writer who signed the dedication.

Originally published in 60 weekly numbers, giving timely practical advice from late August 1756 to the end of October 1757. The author intended the work to be helpful both to the "Gentleman" planning a garden and the "Mechanic" executing the plan.

#### Case 4

**Humboldt, Alexander, Freiherr von, 1769-1859.**

*Voyage de Humboldt et Bonpland.* Paris: F. Schoell [etc.], 1805-1839. 37 vols.

Also known as *Voyage aux régions équinoxiales du nouveaux continent*, this set has been called “the greatest single monument of the exploration of the American continent.”

One of the greatest intellectuals of his time and one of the most famous scholars in Europe, the botanist Alexander von Humboldt spent five years with fellow botanist Aimé Bonpland on a scientific expedition in North and South America during the years 1799-1804. In the twenty years following his return from America, Humboldt spent his entire fortune in the preparation and publication of this 37-volume, folio work.

The work is divided into six groups. Shown, from the group on botany, is the volume entitled *Mimoses et autres plantes légumineuses du Nouveau Continent . . .* (Paris: Librairie grecque-latine-allemande, 1819), edited by Aimé Bonpland. It contains sixty hand-colored plates.

The University of Michigan’s copy of this set was once in the library of the Grand Duke of Oldenburg.

**Jacquin, Nikolaus Joseph, Freiherr von, 1727-1817.**

*Florae Austriacae . . . Icones.* Vienna: Leopold Johann Kaliwoda, 1773-78. 5 vols.

One of the major works authored by this Dutchman of French origin who, in Vienna, gained the position of leading botanist of his day. See also his *Oxalis* (1794) in Floor Case 5 and *Icones plantarum rariorum* (1781-93) in Wall Case I.

“This great *Flora of Austria* is one of the most magnifi-

cent of a flood of local floras that followed the advent of binomial nomenclature. They were designed to segregate from the *Species plantarum* of Linnaeus such plants as could be verified in each country, as well as to add species unknown to Linnaeus.”

—H. H. Bartlett. *Fifty-five Rare Books from the Botanical Library of Mrs. R. A. Hunt.* Ann Arbor, 1949.

#### Case 5

**Jacquin, Nikolaus Joseph, Freiherr von, 1727-1817.**

*Oxalis. Monographia, iconibus illustrata.* Vienna: Christian F. Wappler, [etc.], 1794.

Eighty-one hand-colored plates of the genus of wood sorrels, including the shamrock. See also his *Florae Austriacae* (1773-78) in Floor Case 4 and *Icones plantarum rariorum* (1781-93) in Wall Case I.

**Buc’hoz, Pierre Joseph, 1731-1807.**

*Les dons merveilleux et diversement coloriés de la nature.* Paris: L’auteur, [1779-83]. 2 vols.

One of the more important works by the prolific Buc’hoz. Except for an occasional note engraved at the foot of a plate this work contains no descriptions for the two hundred hand-colored engravings.

Buc’hoz has not been respected by botanists, bibliographers or print collectors because of his habit of using the same plate in several books, each time with slight changes, including changes of nomenclature.

## Case 6

**Smith, Sir James Edward, 1759-1828.**

*Icones pictae plantarum rariorum, descriptionibus et observationibus illustratae.* London, 1790-93.

The descriptions for this rare work on foreign plants naturalized in English gardens were done by the botanist Sir James Edward Smith, who purchased the library and collection of Carl Linnaeus and founded the Linnean Society in 1788.

James Sowerby (1752-1822), also a distinguished botanist and fine artist, made the drawings from which the 18 engraved plates were copied and later hand-colored. For twenty-six years Sowerby contributed illustrations to William Curtis's *Botanical Magazine*, the first and still the finest of all botanical periodicals. This work, like several other Smith-Sowerby collaborations of the period, was not continued beyond a few fascicles.

## Case 7

**Catesby, Mark, 1683-1749.**

*The Natural History of Carolina, Florida and the Bahama Islands . . . .* London: The Author, 1731-43. 2 vols.

The most famous color plate book of American plant and animal life. Note how birds and plants are portrayed together naturalistically, but described separately in English and French.

The naturalist Catesby prepared this book after two long sojourns in America. Unable to afford artists and engravers he learned etching and did the work himself, except for three plates by the well-known German-born artist Georg Dionysius Ehret (1708-1770; see Wall Case III).

Although some of Catesby's drawings are inaccurate, his work is a primary source for the study of American species, and was the best representation of flora and fauna from the North American mainland for over a century.

## Case 8

**Audubon, John James, 1785-1851.**

*The Birds of America, from Original Drawings.*  
London: Published by the author, 1827-38.

Like the work of Humboldt-Bonpland (see Case 4) and Catesby (see Case 7), Audubon's *Birds of America* is part of the massive documenting of species undertaken by botanists and zoologists in the 18th and 19th centuries. This "double elephant folio" edition (so named for the large paper on which it was printed) reproduced 435 species of birds at life-size, each portrayed in their natural botanical habitat.

Audubon's *Birds of America* has very special significance for the University of Michigan Library. It was the first book ever purchased for the collection. The Regents authorized its acquisition on February 5, 1838, and the Library's copy was obtained the following year from William A. Colman, a New York bookseller. The purchase price of \$970, an extraordinary expenditure for the time, was quite an act of faith for a new university which had yet to hold its first class or erect its first building! Today, more than seven million volumes later, *Birds of America* remains the single most valuable printed book in the University Library's collection.



## Wall Case I

**Jacquín, Nikolaus Joseph, Freiherr von, 1727-1817.**  
*Icones plantarum rariorum.* Vienna: C. F. Wappler, 1781-93.

Of a set of 648 plates in 3 volumes published in fascicles over the years 1781-93, this Library owns only the first 100 plates. The turbulent political climate in Europe during these years resulted in many copies of this work remaining incomplete. Jacquín, who was appointed director of the Schönbrunn and University Gardens in Vienna by Empress Maria Theresa, used this volume to depict recently introduced exotics in the Schönbrunn Gardens, including many from South Africa.

See also his *Florae Austriacae* (1773-78) in Floor Case 4 and *Oxalis* (1794) in Floor Case 5.

## Wall Cases II, IV

**Mitchell, Margaretta.**  
*Flowers.* Berkeley, Calif.: Elysian Editions, 1991.

Margaretta Mitchell, a photojournalist and artist, chose a multi-step technique to produce this beautiful book representing current approaches to flower books. Starting with black and white negatives, each image was exposed onto a copper plate. The artist then selected inks to apply to the plate and blend with a paper dauber. The resulting floral prints capture the vibrant color and profusion of tree peonies, trumpet lilies, roses, and phlox.

Forty copies of *Flowers* were printed on Arches paper. Artistic contributors included Jon Goodman who produced the gravure plates and Kate Hanlon who printed the plates on the presses of Robert Townsend in Georgetown, MA. Wesley B. Tanner, now of Ann Arbor, designed the portfolio, set the type using Adobe Minion, and printed the

text pages at Magnolia Editions in Oakland, California. Susan Skarsgard of Ann Arbor created the calligraphic title.

## WALL CASE III

**Ehret, Georg Dionysius, 1708-1770.**  
*Twelve Coloured Reproductions from the original paintings . . . descriptive text by Wilfrid Blunt.*  
Guildford, Eng.: C. W. Traylen, 1953.

Georg Dionysius Ehret, one of the outstanding botanical illustrators of his time, was born in Heidelberg but eventually made England his home. The three colored reproductions shown are from original paintings on vellum in which Ehret used vivid opaque color. All are signed; many are dated. Ehret's magnificent Magnolia, or Laurel Tree of Carolina, is displayed in the center of the case.

## WALL CASES V, VI

**Hooker, Sir Joseph Dalton, 1817-1911.**  
*Illustrations of Himalayan Plants . . . the plates executed by W. H. Fitch.* [London: L. Reeve, 1855].

Sir Joseph Hooker, director of Kew Gardens, and the first botanist to travel in the Himalayas, is well known for two magnificent works, *Rhododendrons of the Sikken-Himalaya* and *Illustrations of Himalayan Plants*, the latter shown here. It includes twenty-four hand-colored lithographic plates drawn by Walter Hood Fitch (1817-1892), who adapted them for this work from the drawings of Indian artists. Fitch, a prolific artist who published nearly 10,000 drawings, is sometimes referred to as the last of the great flower painters.

The plate of Magnolia Campbelli is considered one of the finest depictions of the magnolia.

Front cover illustration: “La Duchess d’Orléans” from Redouté, Pierre Joseph, *Les Roses*, vol. 1 [see Case 2].

Back cover illustration: “Austrian Rose,” Plate 18 from the *Catalogus plantarum.... A Catalogue of Trees, Shrubs, Plants, and Flowers, both Exotic and Domestic, which are Propagated for Sale, in the Gardens near London*. By a Society of Gardeners, London, 1730 [see Case 3].

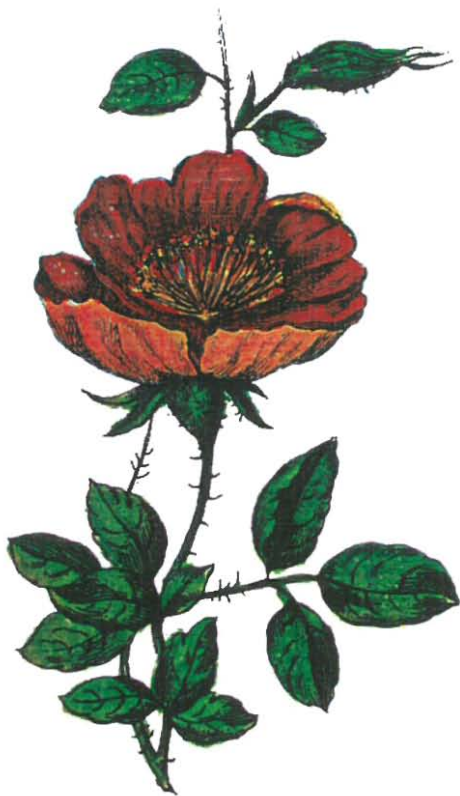
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150th anniversary of the birth of Jo Labadie, founder of the

Labadie Collection,

Opens: Sept. 12, 2000

Curators: Julie Herrada and Ed Weber



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