



THE NEW YORK BOTANICAL GARDEN

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Sumptuous 18th-Century Botanical Folios by Georg Ehret On Display at The New York Botanical Garden

***Georg Ehret: The Greatest Botanical Artist of the 1700s*
April 18–July 19, 2009**

An exhibition entitled *Georg Ehret: The Greatest Botanical Artist of the 1700s* opens on April 18 in the William D. Rondina and Giovanni Foroni LoFaro Gallery of the LuEsther T. Mertz Library at The New York Botanical Garden. The spring 2009 exhibition will explore the life and work of one of the greatest botanical illustrators of all time, Georg Dionysius Ehret (1708-1770). This exhibition will gather together for the first time for public viewing magnificent examples of Ehret's paintings from public and private collections, alongside his published works from the holdings of the Mertz Library.

About the Exhibition

Among the masterpieces on view to the public will be a copy of the only work produced and published by Georg Ehret himself, entitled *Plantae et papilliones rariores* and produced in London between 1748 and 1759. It is the only work for which he also did all of the engraving. Each hand-colored plate is a marvelous example of his unerring instinct for design which makes his printed works so appealing to modern eyes.

Two of the most sumptuous hand-colored natural history folios ever created, *Plantae selectae* and *Hortus nitidissimis*, will also be on display. They were published by one of Ehret's greatest patrons, Dr. Christoph Jacob Trew, a wealthy Nuremberg physician. These works showcased Ehret's talent to a broad audience and ensured his rise to become one of the most sought-after drawing teachers of his day. His works even served as designs for painters at the celebrated Chelsea Porcelain Factory. The beauty of Ehret's compositions is all the more remarkable when one considers that he never received any formal art training.

Ehret settled in London and became well-known in the worlds of horticulture and natural science and met many great men and women of the Enlightenment. He received commissions from both wealthy patrons and botanists. Publications of prominent scientists who knew and patronized Ehret, such as Carl Linnaeus (1707-1778), Hans Sloane (1660-1753), and Mark Catesby (1683-1749), will also be on view in this exhibition.

Artworks in *Georg Ehret: The Greatest Botanical Artist of the 1700s* are on loan from the Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation, the Pierpont Morgan Library, the Collections of W. Graham Arader III, Mrs. Jutta Buck, and Mrs. Rachel Lambert Mellon's Oak Spring Garden Library, and other private collections.

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About the Artist

Born into a German family of gardeners and apprenticed as a journeyman gardener, Georg Ehret began sketching the flowers in his care. He honed his raw talent to become one of the greatest botanical artists of all time. Traveling from Germany to France, Ehret eventually settled in England where his works were used to illustrate some of the 18th century's most sumptuous botanical color-plate folios. A much sought after instructor, he was appointed a fellow of the Royal Society in 1757.

For a botanical illustrator, there could be no better time and place to be than 18th-century London, a period that saw the design and construction of many notable public parks and private gardens. Gardening became fashionable and a number of nurseries sprouted up, offering an increasing array of exotic and curious new plants to collectors who vied with each other to build ever larger glasshouses to contain them. Publication of botanical works increased, requiring illustrators skilled in creating precise plant drawings.

In London, Ehret found himself at the center of a web of botanists and gardeners, many of whom received seeds and plants from the well-known nursery of Peter Collinson. Ehret sometimes painted new species at Collinson's nursery and met many patrons there, as well as at the Chelsea Physic Garden, founded in 1673 as the Apothecaries' Garden with the purpose of training apprentices in identifying plants.

Ehret's scientific training began with his introduction to Dr. Trew in Nuremberg, Germany, who became one of his greatest patrons, and led to his meeting the famed Swedish botanist Carl Linnaeus in the Netherlands. Ehret's technique emphasized botanical dissection and precise rendering, imbuing his compositions with an astonishing beauty and accuracy.

For more information about The New York Botanical Garden and current and upcoming exhibitions, events and offerings, please visit www.nybg.org

*Exhibitions in the Mertz Library are made possible by
the LuEsther T. Mertz Charitable Trust and William D. Rondina and The Carlisle Collection.*

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The New York Botanical Garden is a museum of plants located at Bronx River Parkway (Exit 7W) and Fordham Road. It is easy to reach by Metro-North Railroad or subway. The Botanical Garden is open year-round, Tuesday through Sunday and Monday federal holidays. The best way to enjoy the Garden is with the *All-Garden Pass*, which includes admission to the grounds as well as to seasonal gardens, exhibitions, and attractions such as the Enid A. Haupt Conservatory, Everett Children's Adventure Garden, Rock and Native Plant Gardens, and Tram Tour: \$20 for adults, \$18 for seniors and students with ID, \$8 for children ages 2–12, children under 2 are free. A *Grounds-Only Pass* is available: \$6 for adults, \$5 for adult Bronx Residents; \$3 for seniors, \$2 for students with ID, \$1 for children ages 2–12, children under 2 are free. Grounds-only admission is free all day on Wednesdays and from 10 a.m. to noon on Saturdays. For more information, please call 718.817.8700 or visit www.nybg.org

The New York Botanical Garden is located on property owned in full by the City of New York, and its operation is made possible in part by public funds provided through the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs. A portion of the Garden's general operating funds is provided by The New York City Council and The New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. The Bronx Borough President and Bronx elected representatives in the City Council and State Legislature provide leadership funding.

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