

***Paradise in Print* to Open in the LuEsther T. Mertz Library**

An Exhibition of Lavish Folios and Rare Artwork Featuring the Beauty and Rich History of Caribbean Flora

New extended schedule! April 27–August 19, 2007

For centuries, the Caribbean has been identified with romantic landscapes, brightly colored flowers, and delicious fruits. *Paradise in Print* will present a magnificent display of rarely seen, Caribbean-related illustrated works from the collections of the LuEsther T. Mertz Library. It will open on Friday, April 27, 2007, in the Mertz Library's William D. Rondina and Giovanni Foroni LoFaro Gallery at The New York Botanical Garden and will run through Sunday, August 19, 2007.

Beautifully printed folio editions and rare books, as well as original watercolors by artists associated with the Botanical Garden, will bring to life 500 years of Caribbean history and culture. Following the Spanish conquest, European explorers recorded and celebrated their plant discoveries in publications depicting regional flora. The images capture the exotic beauty of the plants, topography, and natural history of the region. Primarily intended to classify and describe the plants, these images show the Caribbean through the eyes of the early explorers and colonists.

Highlighting both the Caribbean's past and present, the exhibition will be a testament to the importance of art in the service of scientific research and exploration. *Paradise in Print* will offer an unparalleled opportunity to appreciate the Caribbean's beautiful flora within the context of its rich history and culture.

The Many Facets of *Paradise in Print*

Widely known today as a tropical paradise, the Caribbean has a varied and complex flora. Native American tribes cultivated plants from other parts of the Americas, including cassava, peppers, and corn, along with the native regional fruits. The arrival of the Spanish in the 15th century added many crops from the Old World such as rice, citrus fruits, and sugarcane.

The islands have been subject to Western-style development longer than any other part of the New World. Depletion of natural resources and the widespread cultivation of sugarcane and other new crops resulted in broad transformation of Caribbean island landscapes. A surprising number of plants commonly associated with the Caribbean region are not actually native to the area. Nonetheless, despite development, plant diversity in the Caribbean remains high and more than half of the species occur only in the region, often on just one island. This represents a surprisingly high percentage of unique flora for a region so heavily developed and trafficked.

Topics explored in this exhibition will include:

- The Exploration of the Caribbean: The story of European discovery in the region will be illustrated by maps and prints depicting the European exploration and early settlements.

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- **Natural History:** The natural history of the Caribbean depicted through works such as Karl Friederich Philipp von Martius's *Historia naturalis palmarum* (1823–50), Albertus Seba's *Locupletissimi rerum naturalium thesauri* (1734–65), and C. de Rochefort's *Histoire naturelle des Isles Antilles de l'Amérique* (1667). Images of the fauna, flora, shells, and other curiosities will be on view.
- **The Breadfruit Story:** An evocative and anecdotal portrayal of the history of breadfruit in the Caribbean. Originating in the Indo-Malay region and spread throughout the Pacific by voyaging islanders, breadfruit has been an important staple crop in the South Pacific for more than 3,000 years. The mission of Captain Bligh's famous trip (1787–89) on the HMS *Bounty* was to bring breadfruit plants from the South Pacific to the Caribbean.
- **Sugar Trade:** The cultural and economic significance of the booming global sugar trade in the Caribbean during the 18th and 19th centuries.
- **Fruits and Flora:** The fruits and nuts of the region, from familiar banana and papaya to lesser-known fruits such as cherimoya and passion fruit, including rare botanical art from Étienne Denisse's *Flore d'Amérique* (1843–46). Images of flora include original images created for *Flowering Trees of the Caribbean* by Bernard and Harriet Pertchik (1951).
- **Views of Native Life:** Images showing the many uses of palms and several early island views.
- **Caribbean Flora:** Images of colorful plumeria, passionflower, and heliconia, among others.

Major works in the exhibition will include:

- Mark Catesby's *The natural history of Carolina, Florida and the Bahamas Island* (1731–43). Catesby, an 18th-century British naturalist, was the first to produce a full-color natural history of British possessions in North America. Beginning in 1712, he embarked on two scientific expeditions to the southern colonies of British North America. Too poor to hire engravers, Catesby personally translated his watercolors into 220 plates of birds, reptiles, amphibians, fish, insects, and mammals.
- F.R. de Tussac's *Flora Antillarum* (1808). Published in four volumes, Tussac's work is a comprehensive historical collection of plant species of the Antilles. Tussac spent 15 years in the region studying vegetation and eventually became director of the Botanical Garden in Angiers, France, 1816–26.
- Étienne Denisse's *Flore d'Amérique* (1843–46). French royal lithographer Étienne Denisse (active 1814–57) worked for the botanical garden of the Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle in Paris. He lived for many years in the French West Indies, employed by the government to illustrate plants and collect horticultural specimens. *Flore d'Amérique* created a sensation when first released; the more than 200 magnificent hand-colored lithographs included many species considered exotic at the time.

The New York Botanical Garden's Long History in the Caribbean

On the same floor as *Paradise in Print*, in the long display window of the Rare Book Room inside the Mertz Library itself, there will also be a display of journals and other archival objects from the Botanical Garden's own historical fieldwork in the Caribbean. The Garden's reputation today as a center for the study of tropical American plant and fungal biodiversity was, in fact, first established in the Caribbean early in the 20th century.

In February 1906, Nathaniel and Elizabeth Britton, founders of The New York Botanical Garden, embarked on their first trip to Puerto Rico, beginning an association with the island that continued for the rest of their lives. From 1906 until 1933, the Brittons and their collaborators carried out 16 expeditions to Puerto Rico, during which they collected 10,139 specimens, including 38 new species of flowering plants, lichens, fungi, and algae.

Nathaniel Britton's major scientific publication resulting from this work was the multivolume *Botany of Porto Rico and the Virgin Islands* (1923–30). At the time of his death in 1934, he was nearing completion of a popular flora of the island, *Flora Borinqueña*, which was to include non-technical descriptions in English and Spanish of approximately 400 species, illustrated with watercolor paintings by Frances Horne. Horne is known as "Puerto Rico's Audubon" for her beautiful and well-known illustrations of birds. Her botanical watercolors, however, were never published as a set. Now *Flora Borinqueña*, along with Britton's herbarium specimens and historical field notes, can be seen online in the Botanical Garden's Virtual Herbarium at <http://sciweb.nybg.org/science2/hcol/pr/florbor.asp>. In addition, several of Horne's original illustrations will be on display as part of the *Paradise in Print* exhibition.

Special Class Related to *Paradise in Print* Exhibition

The New York Botanical Garden's Continuing Education program is offering a special class, "*Paradise in Print: Selected Works from the Collections of the LuEsther T. Mertz Library*," on Thursday, May 31, from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. Exhibition curator Jane Dorfman will lead a tour of the exhibition and its beautiful works that feature the colorful flora of the Caribbean. For further information, visit www.nybg.org/edu or to register, call 718.817.8747.

Caribbean Gardens: Journey to Paradise

Paradise in Print will be part of a larger celebration of Caribbean flora and culture at the Botanical Garden, collectively known as *Caribbean Gardens: Journey to Paradise*. Other components will include a Caribbean flower show in the Enid A. Haupt Conservatory and an extensive program of public programs featuring Caribbean horticulture, music, food, dance, and other aspects of the region's many cultures.

The Conservatory's seasonal exhibition galleries will feature a Spanish courtyard garden overflowing with the lush, tropical flora of the Caribbean, including hibiscus, passionflower, bougainvillea, and many more. The exhibition will be an inspiring synthesis of the tradition and formality of Spanish courtyard gardens in the region and the variety and vividness of Caribbean plants.

Exhibitions in the Mertz Library are made possible by the LuEsther T. Mertz Charitable Trust, William D. Rondina and The Carlisle Collection, and The Kurt Berliner Foundation. Exhibitions in the Enid A. Haupt Conservatory are made possible by the Estate of Enid A. Haupt.

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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 Tuesday through Sunday and Monday federal holidays from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. April through October. PRICING: \$18, Seniors/Students \$16, Children \$5. Advance tickets are available online at www.nybg.org. Advance tickets are available online at www.nybg.org. For more information, please call 718.817.8700 or visit our Web site at 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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