

For Immediate Release  
July 15, 2005

## **Flowers by Redouté, Artist for an Empire**

*October 22, 2005 – January 22, 2006*

**An exhibition of enduring classics  
by “the Raphael of botanical illustration”**

*Flowers by Redouté, Artist for an Empire*, on view at The New York Botanical Garden from October 22 through January 22, will showcase books, prints, correspondence, portraits, and original artwork from the collections of the LuEsther T. Mertz Library, the Rachel Lambert Mellon collection of Oak Spring Garden Library, and the Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation of Carnegie Mellon University. The exhibition will encompass the life and work of Pierre-Joseph Redouté (1759-1840), one of the most famous botanical illustrators. His light-filled compositions earned him the nickname “the Raphael of botanical illustration.”

Redouté, a French painter of Flemish origin, was born into a family of artists. His exquisite and precise rendering of botanical form brought him to the attention of many influential and powerful patrons including Queen Marie Antoinette (1755-1793) to whose cabinet he was appointed draughtsman in 1786. Eventually, he was to include Napoleon and the Empress Joséphine among his admirers.

The exhibition will be organized around major accomplishments in Redouté’s long and full career during one of the most turbulent eras of French history: the reign of Louis XVI, the Revolution, the Reign of Terror, the Consulate, the Directoire, the Empire, the Bourbon restoration, and the July Revolution of 1830. Through all the upheavals, Redouté was accorded honor and respect and claimed three queens and two empresses as pupils and patrons.

*Flowers by Redouté, Artist for an Empire* will begin with Redouté’s early work and that of key teachers and artists who influenced his artistic development. It will continue with his forays into scientific illustration. It will showcase his delicate yet monumental works featuring Empress Joséphine’s plants at the Chateau of Malmaison, *Les Roses* and *Les Liliacées*, the work for which he is best known. The exhibition will also display decorative prints from Redouté’s later years and conclude with his artistic techniques and his influence on other nineteenth-century artists. Letters, rare books, and other historical documents will set the context for Redouté’s artistic masterpieces.

The Chateau of Malmaison reflected Joséphine’s personal interests and style. A native of Martinique, the Empress loved nature and endeavored to evoke the lush, tropical sensibility of her homeland. Employing eminent botanists, she obtained seeds, trees, and shrubs from around the globe for her hothouse and gardens and is credited with introducing many cultivated plants to Europe. Her passion for roses led her to collect every possible known variety for her garden. The resulting popular interest in the rose drove development of many hybrids that continue to influence the rose gardens of today.

In honor of the Empress, Redouté created *Les Roses*, a three-volume work depicting many of the varieties of roses growing at Malmaison, and the most sumptuous book ever published on roses. The exhibition will feature original artwork done for this publication.

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In addition to *Les Roses*, Redouté's celebrated eight-volume folio *Les Liliacées*, produced during the Napoleonic Wars (1796-1815), also will be on display. This monumental work was created not only as a testament to the French printing arts, but also as a record of the most stunning plants grown in the hothouses of Malmaison, many of which made their first appearance to horticulturists with this publication. *Les Liliacées* features lilies, of course, but also includes illustrations of other flowers and fruits grown at Malmaison, including amaryllis, iris, and orchids.

The exhibition will include samples of Redouté's decorative hand-colored prints from *Les Choix des Plus Belles Fleurs et des Plus Beaux Fruits*, issued between 1827-1833, and a display explaining his trademark artistic techniques. A final theme will be Redouté's influence on other contemporary artists such as John James Audubon and his lasting legacy through many prominent pupils. By inspiring other artists with his vision and technique, Redouté exerted a tremendous influence over the course of botanical illustration in the nineteenth century.

Despite his fame, lasting financial success eluded Redouté. He supported himself with commissions and as a painting instructor to royal pupils as well as to the accomplished artists Panacre Bessa (1772-1835) and Pierre Jean François Turpin (1775-1840). His acclaimed mastery brought him commissions from prominent scientists such as Augustin Pyramus de Candolle (1778-1841) and André Michaux (1746-1802). Selections from the works of Redouté's pupils as well as the scientific works illustrated by Redouté himself will be included in the exhibition.

*Generous support for Flowers by Redouté, Artist for an Empire was provided by Stephanie and Lawrence Flinn, Jr.*

*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.*

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**The New York Botanical Garden is a museum of plants located at Bronx River Parkway (Exit 7W) and Fordham Road in the Bronx. The Garden is open Tuesday—Sunday and on Monday holidays, from 10 a.m.–6 p.m. April to October and from 10 a.m. –5 p.m. November to March. The best way to enjoy the Botanical Garden is with the *Combination Ticket* that includes grounds admission, the Conservatory, Rock Garden, Native Plant Garden, Tram Tour, and Everett Children's Adventure Garden, and costs \$13 for adults, \$11 for students and seniors, \$5 for children 2–12. Grounds admission is free all day Wednesdays and on Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. For information call 718. 817. 8700 or visit our Web site at [www.nybg.org](http://www.nybg.org).**

Media Contacts: George Shakespear or Maria Izquierdo 718.817.8616