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Smithsonian Libraries' Images Featured in Assouline Publishing Book

More than two centuries of natural history illustrations from the collections of the Smithsonian Institution Libraries are featured in a 300-page volume recently released by Assouline Publishing. The book, "Botanicals," brings to life stunning hand-colored engravings, etchings and lithographs of flowers, fruits and butterflies.

"Botanicals" features the works of four leading naturalists: Maria Sibylla Merian, a 17th-century artist and entomologist; E. A. Seguy, whose extraordinary work was inspired by the art nouveau and art deco movements; Robert John Thornton, a British visionary renowned for his interest in botany; and Jean Jules Linden, a 19th-century orchid collector and horticulturist.

The book's introduction and text were written by Leslie K. Overstreet, the curator of natural history rare books at the Smithsonian Institution Libraries. She came to the Institution in 1980 and worked in the anthropology and zoology libraries at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History for eight years before moving to the Special Collections Department. Overstreet has published bibliographical articles in the journal Archives of Natural History and has given talks at conferences on various natural history subjects.

Stephen Van Dyk, librarian at the Smithsonian's Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum Library, and reference librarian Elizabeth Broman provided the initial impetus for the book and worked with Assouline to select volumes from the museum's library collections. David Holbert of Smithsonian Institution Libraries Imaging Center handled the delicate work of scanning the volumes, and Erin Rushing of the New Media Office managed the contract arrangements with Assouline.

"Botanicals" is available online through Assouline Publishing.

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