

Bugs, Flowers

and the women who depict them

Maria Sibylla Merian (1647-1717)

Maria Sibylla Merian was a German-born [naturalist](#) and scientific [illustrator](#), a descendant of the [Frankfurt](#) branch of the Swiss [Merian family](#). Merian was one of the early European naturalists to observe insects directly.

Merian received her artistic training from her stepfather, [Jacob Marrel](#), a student of the [still life](#) painter [Georg Flegel](#). Merian published her first book of natural illustrations in 1675. She had started to collect insects as an adolescent and at age 13, she raised [silkworms](#). In 1679, Merian published the first volume of a two-volume series on [caterpillars](#); the second volume followed in 1683. Each volume contained 50 plates engraved and etched by Merian. Merian documented evidence on the process of metamorphosis and the plant hosts of 186 European insect species. Along with the illustrations Merian included a descriptions of their life cycles.



In 1699, Merian traveled to [Dutch Surinam](#) to study and record the tropical insects. In 1705, she published *Metamorphosis insectorum Surinamensium*. Merian's *Metamorphosis* has been credited with influencing a range of naturalist illustrators. Because of her careful observations and documentation of the [metamorphosis](#) of the [butterfly](#), she is considered by [David Attenborough](#) to be among the more significant contributors to the field of [entomology](#). She discovered many new facts about insect life through her studies.

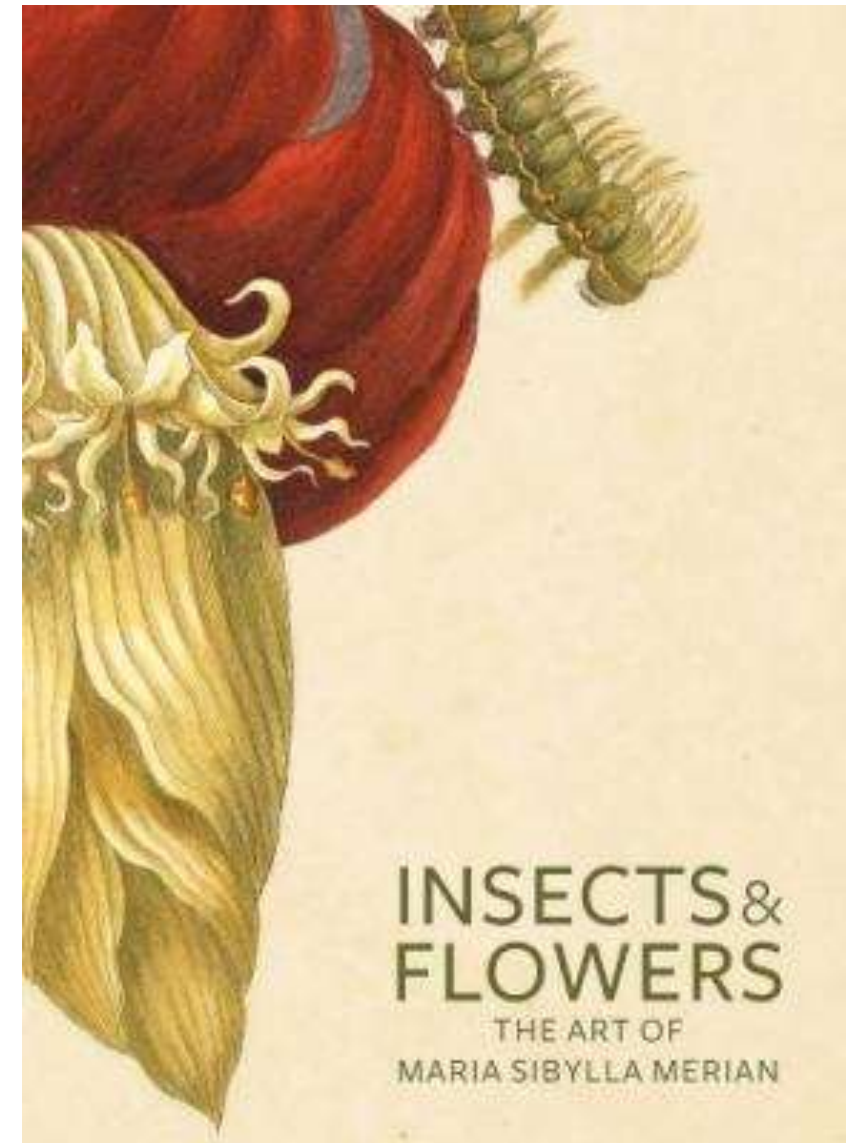
Maria Sibylla Merian, age 52, voyaged to Suriname when women were still burnt as witches. Her paintings forever transformed how we see insect metamorphosis.

<https://laterbloomer.com/maria-sibylla-merian/>

<https://www.botanicalartandartists.com/about-maria-sibylla-merian.html>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x0dG6wrS1tE>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8EPNeSa1hP0>





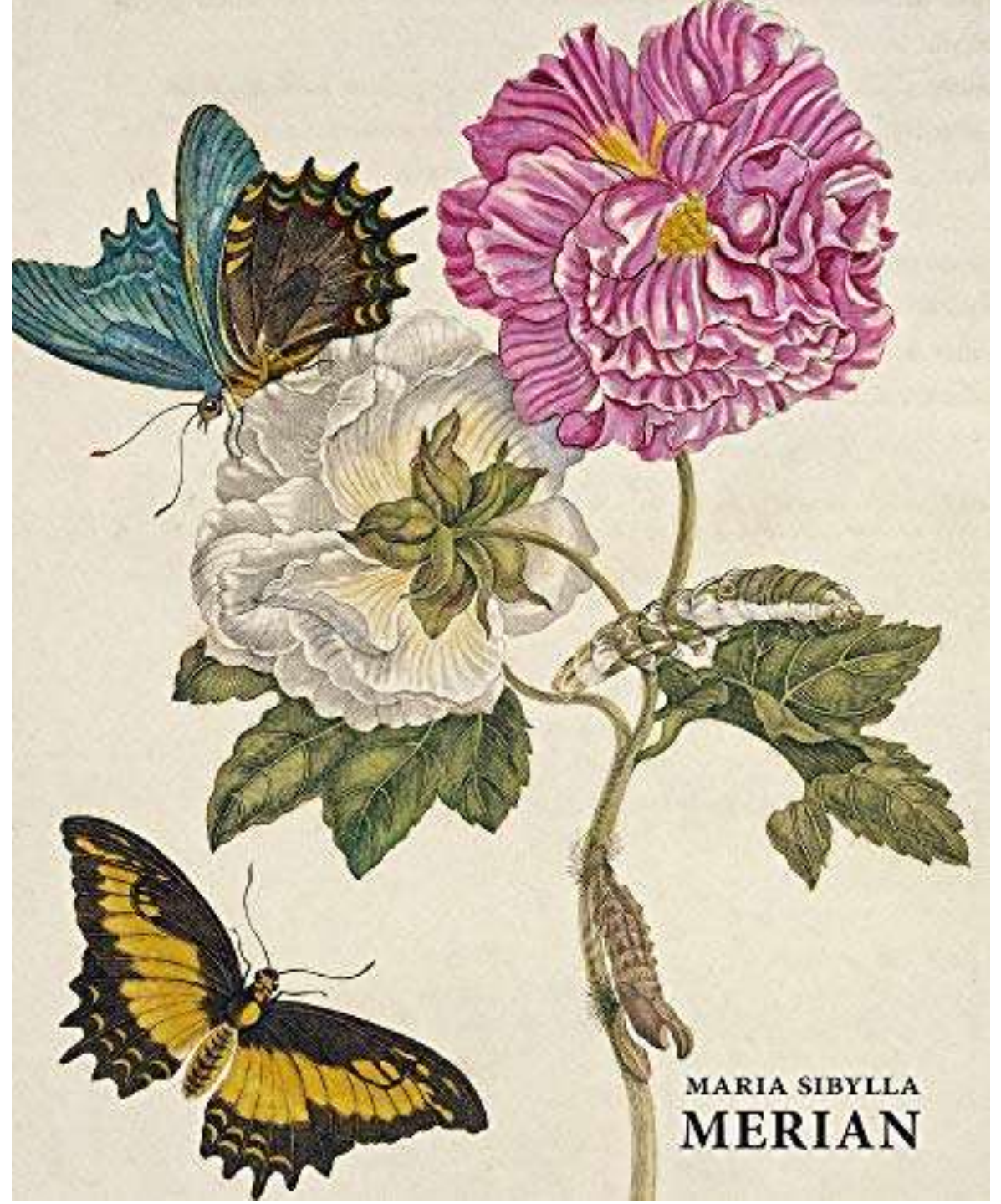


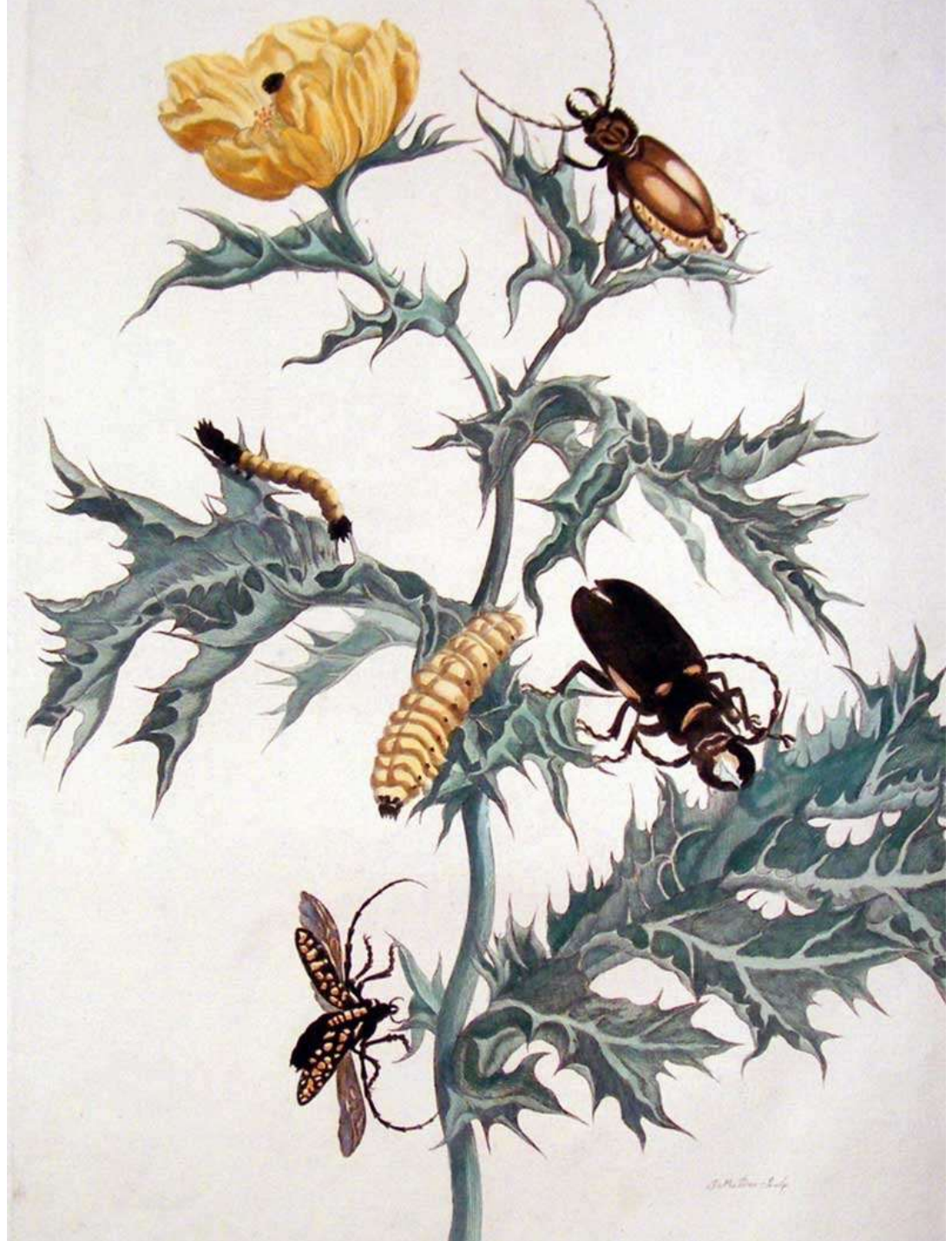










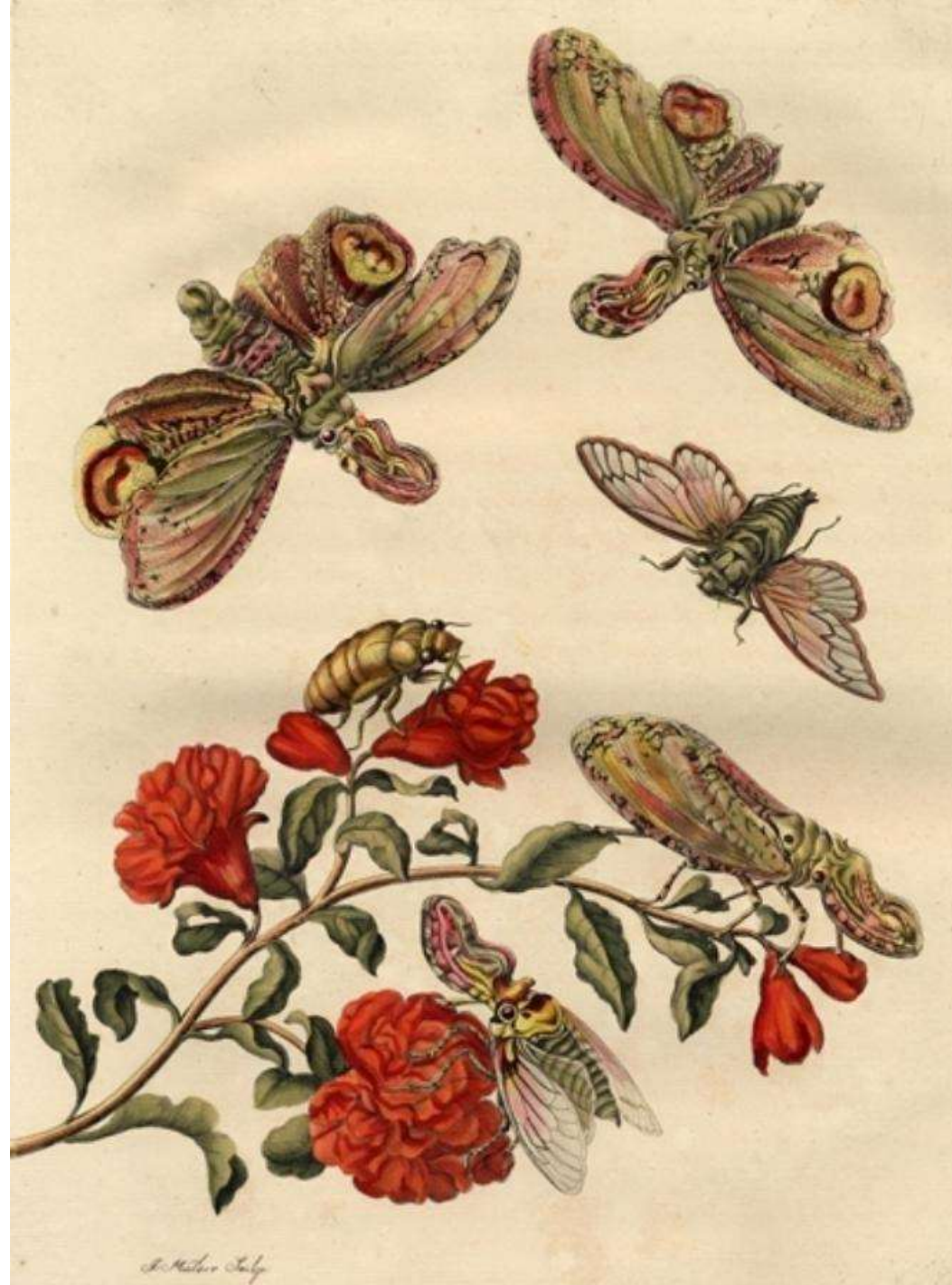


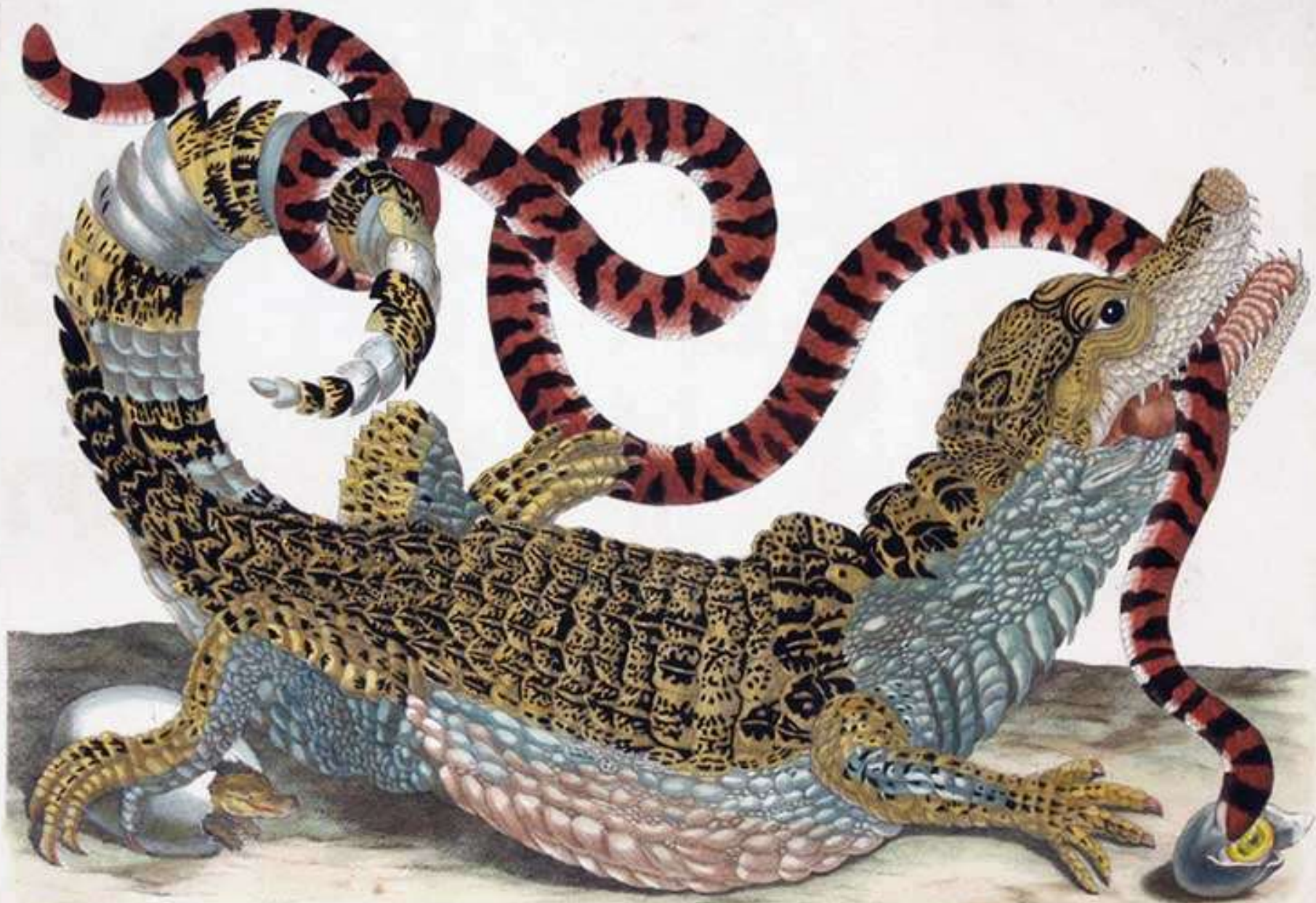












Rachel Ruysch (1664-1750)

Rachel Ruysch was a [still-life](#) painter from the [Northern Netherlands](#). She specialized in flowers, inventing her own style and achieving international fame in her lifetime. Due to a long and successful career that spanned over six decades, she became the best documented woman painter of the [Dutch Golden Age](#).

<https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/rachel-ruysch>





















Mary Delany (1700-1788)

Mary Delany had always been an artist, but during her marriage to Dr Delany she had the time to hone her skills. She was also a gardener, and did needlework, drawing, and painting; but was best known for her paper-cutting:

"For these 'mosaicks' are coloured paper representing not only conspicuous details but also contrasting colors or shades of the same colour so that every effect of light is caught". She struck up a friendship with [Letitia Bushe](#), a watercolorist and miniaturist, with whom she embarked on a number of artistic projects.^[14] In 1771, a widow in her early 70s, Mary began on [decoupage](#), a fashion with ladies of the court. Her works were detailed and botanically accurate depictions of plants, using [tissue paper](#) and hand coloration. She created 985 of these works, calling them her "Paper Mosaiks", from the age of 71 to 88, when her eyesight failed her.

"With the plant specimen set before her she cut minute particles of colored paper to represent the petals, stamens, calyx, leaves, veins, stalk and other parts of the plant, and, using lighter and darker paper to form the shading, she stuck them on a black background. By placing one piece of paper upon another she sometimes built up several layers and in a complete picture there might be hundreds of pieces to form one plant. It is thought she first dissected each plant so that she might examine it carefully for accurate portrayal.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u0_RgefQ8ss

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4sM-532Eglg>









Helianthus annuus
Great Sun-flower.

MD



Paeonia moutan
Chinese Hollyhock.

MD









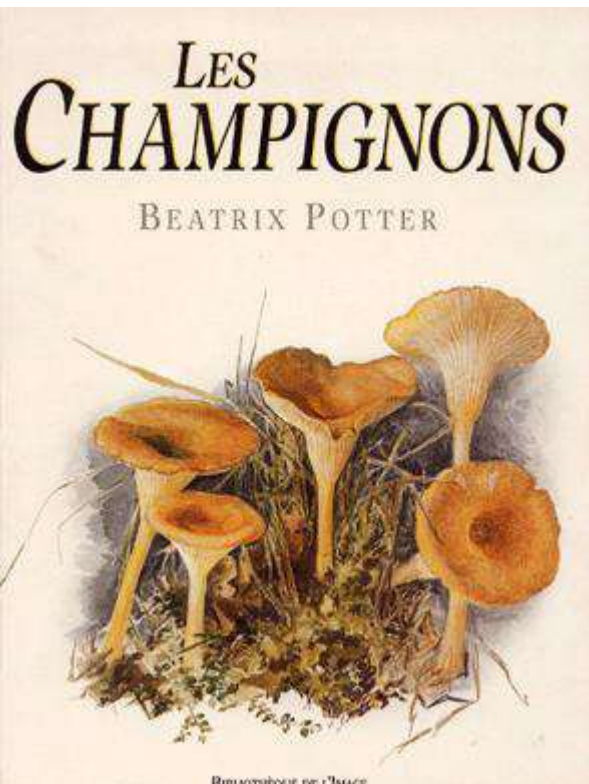
Beatrix Potter (1866-1944)

Helen Beatrix Potter was an English writer, illustrator, [natural scientist](#) and [conservationist](#); she was best known for her children's books featuring animals, such as those in [*The Tale of Peter Rabbit*](#).

Born into an upper-middle-class household, Potter was educated by [governesses](#) and grew up isolated from other children. She had numerous pets and spent holidays in Scotland and the [Lake District](#), developing a love of landscape, flora and fauna, all of which she closely observed and painted.

Potter's first known watercolors of mushrooms date from the summer of 1887, when she was 20 years old. By the early 1890s, more and more of Potter's art focused on fungi.

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BpmyZyQpc5g>
- <http://www.bbc.com/earth/story/20160215-beatrix-potter-pioneering-scientist-or-passionate-amateur>













Tiffany Bozic

Tiffany Bozic is a California artist whose work has been described as John James Audubon on acid. Her work evokes the tradition of tightly rendered nature illustration, which she explodes with highly emotional, surreal metaphors. Not so much departing from reality as articulating it more deeply, Bozic makes paintings in which a faun can simultaneously be alive and dead. A population of blackbirds become as one in a perfect sphere of black oil. As nature is ever more subjugated by human impacts, Bozic corrects the balance sheet. She establishes inescapable chains of consequence among the myriad species whose interactions create the world.





Annemieke Mein

Annemieke Mein (1944 [Haarlem](#)) is a Dutch-born Australian textile artist who specialises in depicting wildlife. She was the first textile artist to be member of *Wildlife Art Society of Australasia* and the *Australian Guild of Realist Artists*. The subjects of her sculpted textiles are birds, frogs, gum and wattle blossoms, and invertebrates such as moths, dragonflies, wasps and grasshoppers. Her fondness for insects and her sympathetic images, often greatly enlarged and showing normally invisible colors and textures, have revealed new aspects of the everyday world.

<https://www.annemiekemein.net.au/superb%20blue%20wrens.mp4>

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-06-09/textile-artist-annemieke-mein-loses-her-sense-of-touch/11185514>

























Kate Kato

Kate Kato creates intricate, life-sized sculptures of plants and insects, curating collections of them and building installations and dioramas which aim to document different species and encourage a curiosity in nature. They are made using recycled paper, wire and other reclaimed materials which are carved, shaped and sometimes embroidered to bring the sculptures to life. I view my work as a 3D record of my discoveries and experiences of the natural world. By curating collections and building dioramas I hope to inspire and inform the imagination of others, encouraging them to question what they see and the worlds I have documented.

<https://www.kasasagidesign.com/>

<https://www.kasasagidesign.com/2nd-about>





Assignment Suggestions

- Find something in nature and draw, collage or paint it in the style of a botanical illustration.
- Create 3-D art of bugs or plants from paper, fabric or recycled materials.
- Illustrate the life-cycle of anything.
- Invent a life form and document it.