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Book review

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Willdenowia
Annals of the Botanic Garden and Botanical Museum Berlin-Dahlem

Book review

Rees J.: Die verzeichnete Fremde. Formen und Funktionen des Zeichnens im Kontext europäischer Forschungsreisen 1770–1830. – Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink, 2015. – ISBN 978-3-7705-5589-5. – 15.6 × 23.3 × 2.4 cm, 487 pp.; paperback. – Price: EUR 69.00.

It may come as a surprise to find in Willdenowia the review of a substantial *Habilitationsschrift* submitted in 2012 to the Fachbereich Geschichts- und Kulturwissenschaften of the Freie Universität Berlin and belatedly published in Paderborn in 2015. However, there is a good reason for doing so: the book deals with the pictorial documentation of objects produced by professional illustrators during the major expeditions of exploration that took place in the period 1770–1830. Since plant illustrations often form part of protologues, and in certain cases are the only element on which the name of plant is based, this work is relevant for the plant taxonomist, in particular since so many illustrations are connected with these expeditions. For obvious reasons, this review is focused on what is said about images of plants, leaving aside images of animals, people, artefacts and landscapes.

The author's approach is clearly comparative, and it is noteworthy that the basis of his research is indeed broad, taking into account expeditions sent out by the British, French, Spanish and Russian navies as well as land-bound explorations like those undertaken in Brazil on Austrian and Russian orders. Illustrators well known to botanists include Sydney Parkinson on the *Endeavour*, Georg Adam Forster on the *Resolution*, Felipe Bauzá y Cañas on the *Descubierta*, Ferdinand Bauer on the *Investigator*, Ludwig York Choris on the *Rurik* and Georg Wilhelm Bauernfeind, who travelled with Carsten Niebuhr in Arabia. For good reason the famous second expedition to Kamchatka (1733–1742) is also included as a standard of reference.

The book has a clear structure and starts with two chapters dealing with the engagement of the illustrators, often at short notice and poorly paid, and the instructions they received – as a rule from land-bound superiors who had not the slightest idea of the travelling and working conditions overseas. The following chapter is focused on what was expected by the scientists travelling together with the illustrators. Of particular interest to plant taxonomists is Chapter 4, which has in its focus colour documentation and standardization, pigments, colour codes and the refined approach of Ferdinand Bauer during his travels in the Levant and Australia. The last three chapters will appeal rather more to anthropologists, ethnologists and geographers than to botanists, since they deal primarily with the pictorial documentation of people and landscapes.

It has to be said that parts of the text are difficult to digest by a mind not *au fait* with the sublime thinking of the historian of art and culture. There is, e.g., a "Protologue in Bedlam", referring to the Bethlehem Hospital in London and two variants of a particular copper engraving in William Hogarth's series *A Rake's Progress* in the context of the prevailing cultural climate of the time. The same applies to the – for the plant taxonomist – often somewhat verbose and over-complex terminology, which may be standard in art and cultural history. On the other hand, the biological terminology is correctly applied – with a single exception, when a dorsal view of a crab is called the rectal view (p. 223). The illustrations – 94 black and white embedded in the text plus 12 colour plates at its end, all provided with detailed legends – are carefully chosen. An appendix contains twelve documents pertinent to the story, among them unpublished letters by Georg Heinrich von Langsdorff to Karl Robert Graf Nesselrode, the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, and by Choris to his travel companion, Adelbert Chamisso. Needless to say, a list of archival sources used by the author in Berlin, London, Paris and Vincennes is included, as is a very extensive bibliography of the printed works consulted by him and a register to persons and localities. In short, a valuable contribution to the extremely rich literature on late eighteenth and early nineteenth century expeditions has been produced, with the illustrator in its focus and as seen from the angle of the art historian.

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