

Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation
5th Floor, Hunt Library
Carnegie Mellon University
4909 Frew Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15213-3890
Contact: Lugene Bruno, Curator of Art, and Cate Hammond, Assistant Curator of Art
Telephone: 412-268-2434
Email: huntinst@andrew.cmu.edu
Web site: <http://huntbot.andrew.cmu.edu/HIBD/Exhibitions/Exhibitions.shtml>

1 July 2011, For Immediate Release

HUNT INSTITUTE PRESENTS

Botany and History Entwined

Rachel Hunt's Legacy

16 September–15 December 2011

Pittsburgh, PA—To celebrate our 50th anniversary, Hunt Institute presents rare gems from the original collection of our founder Rachel McMasters Miller Hunt (1882–1963). Her early love of nature and books grew into a lifelong pursuit of rare or historical works about plants, gardens and botany. She became fascinated by the people associated with these books and also collected their portraits, letters, manuscripts and original artworks.

Elmhurst, the home and gardens of Rachel and Roy Arthur Hunt (1881–1966) on Ellsworth Avenue in Shadyside in Pittsburgh's East End, housed her collection of rare books, artwork, antique furniture, tapestries and sculpture and reflected her love of plants and their history. Throughout her life Rachel welcomed visits from scholars, hosted garden clubs and entertained publishers, book collectors and authors at Elmhurst and also shared her collection through talks and gallery and museum exhibitions. By the 1950s Rachel Hunt's collection was widely known for its excellence and was sought by some of the country's leading universities and botanical centers. Under the editorial stewardship of her personal librarian, Jane Quinby, and with essays from leading authorities on her collection and the historical background of the items in it, work commenced on the *Catalogue of Botanical Books in the Collection of Rachel McMasters Miller Hunt* (Hunt Catalogue; 1958–1961). Wanting the collection to remain in Pittsburgh, the Hunts decided to donate it and a building to Carnegie Institute of Technology (now Carnegie Mellon University) to house both her collection and a campus library.

Dedicated in 1961, the Rachel McMasters Miller Hunt Botanical Library was envisioned as a research center focusing on the history of botany and the history of botanical publication and as a repository where her collections would be preserved, curated, augmented and made accessible to researchers. By 1971 the organization had so diversified that it was renamed Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation with four programmatic departments of Archives, Art, Bibliography and the Library. In the last fifty years Rachel Hunt's original collection has been substantially augmented in all four departments. In accordance with the Hunts' original vision of a living collection with public availability, the Institute maintains a regular exhibition and publication program and accessibility for research on a variety of scientific and cultural subjects related to the plant sciences.

Beginning with Rachel Hunt's early interest in books, bookbinding and collecting, the materials on display in this exhibition are divided by subject and reflect her interests in the history of the herbal, the development of gardens and garden plants, the foundation of botany as a science and the botanical discoveries made through travel and exploration. The exhibition concludes with the foundation of the Hunt Botanical Library, its evolution to Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation and descriptions of key aspects of the four departments. A color-illustrated catalogue will accompany the exhibition.

The exhibition will be on display on the 5th floor of the Hunt Library building at Carnegie Mellon University and will be open to the public free of charge. Hours: Monday–Friday, 9 A.M.–noon and 1–5 P.M.; Sunday, 1–4 P.M. (except 20 and 24–27 November). Because our hours of operation are occasionally subject to change, please call or email before your visit to confirm our hours. For further information, contact the Hunt Institute at 412-268-2434.

Additional talks and tours

We will also offer several talks and tours during this exhibition. All talks and tours will take place at 2:00 P.M. on the respective days.

On Sunday, 18 September, Archivist Angela Todd will present "USDA botanist B. Y. Morrison and his forward-thinking secretary, May Blaine." Morrison's sketches and ink drawings of private and public gardens in Asia date back to 1915 when he

received a travel fellowship from Harvard, but his lively drawings are extant due solely to the encouragement of his secretary, May Blaine. As women entered colleges and universities but did not rise to the ranks of scientists, those degreed women taught high school botany and worked as secretaries, lab assistants and wives. The women in the USDA secretarial pool all had post-secondary schooling, including Blaine. She was secretary to the head of the Department of Plant Exploration and Introduction from 1918 to 1955, serving eight different heads, including Morrison. Blaine not only sent her private correspondence with and short biographies of USDA explorers and botanists to Hunt Botanical Library but also convinced Morrison, who saw no need to preserve his legacy, to send his drawings, too.

During Carnegie Mellon's Cèilidh Weekend, Curatorial Assistant Catherine Hammond will give a gallery tour on Saturday, 29 October, and Publication and Marketing Manager Scarlett Townsend will give a tour on Sunday, 30 October, of the antique furniture in the reading room, which was designed to capture the essence of Rachel Hunt's personal library. The herbals, the autograph letters and the Redouté paintings were important elements of her original collection, but equally important to her was the setting in which these items were enjoyed. She did not want her new library to look common or commercial. With the help of Harold LeBaron, her longtime interior decorator, and George H. M. Lawrence, our founding director, she chose items reflecting her tastes and personality.

Curator of Art Eugene Bruno's talk, "Pierre-Joseph Redouté and his collaboration with botanists," is on Sunday, 6 November. Pierre-Joseph Redouté (1759–1840) is considered to be the most famous flower painter of the 19th century. He exhibited his floral bouquets in the Paris Salon and illustrated some of the most beautiful color-plate folios ever produced. What is less known is the work that Redouté created for many important botanists of his era. This talk will include his work for Charles Louis L'Heritier (1746–1800), who was the first to recognize that Redouté's talent could be channeled into creating scientific illustrations that would compliment botanical texts, which helped to launch Redouté's multi-faceted career. Prints by Redouté from a selection of publications will be on temporary display during the talk.

Librarian Charlotte Tancin's talk, "At the center of the network: Dutch botanist Carolus Clusius (1526–1609)," is on Sunday, 4 December. Botanist, traveler, writer, correspondent and exotic plant and animal enthusiast Clusius used his vast personal network to gain and spread information, exchange seeds and plants, and advance knowledge of the natural world. His career touched all four subject areas of our 50th anniversary exhibition: herbals, gardens, botany and travel and exploration. His stature and legacy made him a major figure in the history of botany and plant introduction and thus a natural subject of interest for Rachel Hunt.

The Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation, a research division of Carnegie Mellon University, specializes in the history of botany and all aspects of plant science and serves the international scientific community through research and documentation. To this end, the Institute acquires and maintains authoritative collections of books, plant images, manuscripts, portraits and data files, and provides publications and other modes of information service. The Institute meets the reference needs of botanists, biologists, historians, conservationists, librarians, bibliographers and the public at large, especially those concerned with any aspect of the North American flora.

Hunt Institute was dedicated in 1961 as the Rachel McMasters Miller Hunt Botanical Library, an international center for bibliographical research and service in the interests of botany and horticulture, as well as a center for the study of all aspects of the history of the plant sciences. By 1971 the Library's activities had so diversified that the name was changed to Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation. Growth in collections and research projects led to the establishment of four programmatic departments: Archives, Art, Bibliography and the Library. The current collections include approximately 30,150 book and serial titles; 29,000+ portraits; 29,270 watercolors, drawings and prints; and 2,000 autograph letters and manuscripts. The Archives specializes in biographical information about, portraits of and handwriting samples from scientists, illustrators and all others in the plant sciences. The Archives is a repository of alternate resort and as such has collected over 300 institutional and individual archival collections that may not have otherwise found an easy fit at another institution. Including artworks dating from the Renaissance, the Art Department's collection now focuses on contemporary botanical art and illustration, where the coverage is unmatched. The Art Department organizes and stages exhibitions, including the triennial *International Exhibition of Botanical Art & Illustration*. The Bibliography Department maintains comprehensive data files (243,000+) on the history and bibliography of botanical literature. Known for its collection of historical works on botany dating from the late 1400s to the present, the Library's collection focuses on the development of botany as a science and also includes herbals (eight are incunabula), gardening manuals and florilegia, many of them pre-Linnaean. Modern taxonomic monographs, floristic works and serials as well as selected works in medical botany, economic botany, landscape architecture and a number of other plant-related topics are also represented.

#####