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All enquiries and manuscripts should be directed to:

Professor R. W. Home
Department of History and Philosophy of Science
The University of Melbourne,
Parkville, Vic. 3010, Australia

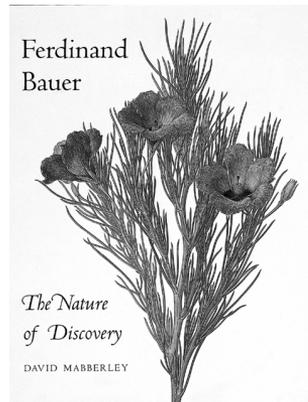


Telephone: +61 3 8344 6556
Fax: +61 3 8344 7959
Email: r.home@hps.unimelb.edu.au

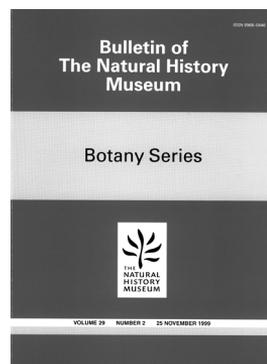
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David Mabberley: *Ferdinand Bauer, the Nature of Discovery*. London: Merrell Holberton Publishers and The Natural History Museum, 1999. 128 pp., 62 col. plates, ISBN: 1 85894 087 7 (HB), \$AU98.



David J. Mabberley and David T. Moore: *Catalogue of the holdings in the Natural History Museum (London) of the Australian botanical drawings of Ferdinand Bauer (1760-1826) and cognate materials relating to the Investigator voyage of 1801–1805*. Bulletin of the Natural History Museum, Botany Series **29(2)**, 81–226 (November 1999), no price given.



In 1801 Ferdinand Bauer joined the company of HMS *Investigator* and embarked on what was expected to be a three-year journey to Australia to under-

take a detailed survey of the coast. As well as the usual vicissitudes of sea travel in the era, the ship suffered from a perpetually-leaking hull, the imprisonment of the captain, Matthew Flinders, in Mauritius, and the temporary stranding of Bauer and naturalist Robert Brown in the colonies for nearly two years, from August 1803 until May 1805. It was, however, a journey which was to enhance Bauer's already considerable reputation as natural history draftsman and to result in an unprecedented suite of paintings of outstanding quality of Australian plants and animals, many of which were new to science.

Bauer was the fifth son of an artistic family and, together with his equally talented elder brother Franz, received training in the accurate depiction of plants from a local medical man and amateur botanist. As young men their talent was exploited to great effect by the director of the botanic gardens in Vienna and their respective careers as botanical artists were assured. They are generally considered to be among the best botanical artists the world has seen. The accuracy and artistic quality of their work provides continual inspiration for scientific artists. But whereas Franz enjoyed a settled life as artist for Joseph Banks at Kew, Ferdinand took the more adventurous course of travel, firstly in the Mediterranean and then to the antipodes.

In recent years there has been a flurry of works on the life and accomplishments of Ferdinand Bauer. The Australian drawings and the story of Bauer's sojourn in the colonies were the subject of *Ferdinand Bauer: the Australian Natural History Drawings* by Marlene Norst (Melbourne: Lothian Publishing Company, 1989). A touring exhibition, which brought 64 original works to Australia in 1997, was accompanied by a detailed and beautifully produced catalogue, *An Exquisite Eye*, edited by Watts, Pomfrett and Mabberley, published by the Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales. Bauer's Mediterranean

travels have been recounted by H. W. Lack (with Mabberley) in *The Flora Graeca Story: Sibthorp, Bauer and Hawkins in the Levant* (Oxford: 1999), while his Norfolk Island sketches and his numbered colour palette are the subjects of separate papers by D. T. Moore (in *Archives of Natural History* **25** 213–220 [1998]) and Lack and V. Ibanez (in *Curtis's Botanical Magazine* **14** 87–100 [1997])

Adding to this corpus are the two works under review, *Ferdinand Bauer, the Nature of Discovery* and *Catalogue of the Holdings in the Natural History Museum (London) of the Australian Botanical Drawings of Ferdinand Bauer*. Much of Bauer's work remains unfamiliar, because it was executed for official purposes, or for wealthy private patrons and published in expensive large format books produced in small numbers. While hundreds of paintings and drawings are in museum collections, Bauer left little in the way of letters or diaries. There would seem therefore to be scant opportunity for a biographer to publish yet another book.

Ferdinand Bauer, the Nature of Discovery is one of a series of volumes designed to showcase for a wide general audience the wealth of material in the collections of the Natural History Museum in London. Other volumes in the series are on Sydney Parkinson, artist in Joseph Banks' entourage aboard *Endeavour* under the command of James Cook, and George Raper and Thomas Watling, who recorded in paint the earliest days of the settlement of New South Wales. In eleven chapters Mabberley gives, in readable style, the details of Bauer's life and accomplishments. Equal coverage is given to the Mediterranean and antipodean travels that are otherwise the subjects of separate publications, while Bauer's work for botanists such as A. B. Lambert and John Lindley are also recounted. Given the general lack of sources written by Bauer himself, Mabberley uses the words of others, including

Flinders and Brown, to great effect. Little of what he says is new, but it is drawn from an extensive list of published material, all of which is noted at the ends of the chapters. The book is soundly based in the author's own research and drawn from material with which he is very familiar.

The volume is generous with the number of Bauer's paintings and drawings reproduced. All but seven are from the Natural History Museum's own collections. There is a judicious mixture of those images that are very well known, such as *Brunonia australis*, and those that have never previously appeared in print. Given that some hundreds of Bauer's paintings are still unpublished, a good balance is struck between the familiar and the unfamiliar. Of the sixty-two coloured plates, twenty-four are watercolours of Australian plants and animals, seven published here for the first time. A further thirty-six plates are engravings (and one lithograph) by various artists, including both Franz and Ferdinand, from Ferdinand's paintings and sketches. The remaining two are of *Banksia baueri*, named by Robert Brown in honour of his travelling companion, and *Bauera ruboides*, named by Banks for both Bauer brothers. Accompanying the plates are thirty-three black and white illustrations. In addition to original illustrations by Bauer, including some landscapes (for which he is less well known but in which he was equally skilled), are nine portraits of the *dramatis personae*. For each plant and illustration the caption embodies a mini-history of where and when Bauer executed the drawing and the plant material he used. The captions for a number of plates and illustrations are followed by an asterisk and it is not immediately apparent that this refers to the 'Notes to the plates and figures' on the last page. An appendix lists the forty-two plants, one fish and two birds named after Bauer. The index is a list of people only.

The *Catalogue* is similarly based on the collections of the Natural History Museum, but this time only the Australian botanical watercolours and related materials from the *Investigator* voyage are included. In a short introductory section, the authors relate how Bauer executed his sketches, recorded colours and completed the paintings when back in London. The variety of sources used by the authors to elucidate the history of these paintings includes lists made by Bauer himself and others, herbarium labels and manuscript notes by Robert Brown. It is obvious that a great deal of research and cross-referencing had to be done in order for this *Catalogue* to be produced.

In all, two hundred and fifty-four paintings of Australian plants and fungi are included in the *Catalogue*. The entry for each painting is a model of archival description for such materials. Details are given of current and past catalogue numbers (which are indicators of provenance), any manuscript annotations and notes as to the size and composition of the painting. Where a painting has been reproduced, in other books or even as greeting cards, this is also noted. Botanical information supplied includes the correct botanical name and where it was published, and origin of the material which Bauer used as the basis for his design, whether dried specimen (and indeed which specific specimen) or living material grown in England from seed. Each painting is reproduced greatly reduced and in shades of grey so that the artistry and accuracy of Bauer's work is not apparent. That, however, was not the purpose of the volume. It is a work principally for botanists, intended to make the watercolours accessible to the scientific community and to facilitate further research on Bauer and his specimens and artwork.

Ferdinand Bauer, the Nature of Discovery draws together material which is otherwise available in separate and not

necessarily readily available publications, and presents a readable account of an artist of central importance in the discovery of the Australian flora. The book is also a visual feast, giving the reader much to enjoy in looking at Bauer's paintings and drawings. The *Catalogue*, on the other hand, is rather more detailed and technical, its audience being professionals. Here then are two works with different audiences, which admirably succeed in their separate purposes.

Helen M. Cohn
Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne