

PIONEERS OF NATURAL HISTORY ILLUSTRATION:

Exploring the Oak Spring Garden Library collection through the work of
Maria Sibylla Merian and Mark Catesby



A Project-based Course at the Oak Spring Garden Foundation,
Upperville, Virginia

10th June to 19th June 2020



COURSE DESCRIPTION

A ten-day project-based course will be held for a small group of eight participants at the Oak Spring Garden Foundation (OSGF), Upperville, Virginia, 10th-19th June 2020. Participants will receive instruction in techniques and approaches for working with historical natural history materials and will also develop their own research projects using the OSGF collections.

Taking as a point of departure the work of pioneer artist naturalists Maria Sibylla Merian (German, 1647-1717) and Mark Catesby (English, 1683-1749), participants will study the rich resources in the collections developed by Rachel Lambert Mellon at the Oak Spring Garden Library, as case studies for conceiving and developing their own projects based on the OSGF collections. Materials to be made available will range from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, and will include botanical, entomological, ornithological, travel and collecting literature, maps, manuscripts, printing blocks and watercolors. Participants will examine first edition copies of Merian's *Metamorphosis insectorum surinamensis* (1705) and Catesby's *Natural History of Carolina, Florida and the Bahama Islands* (1732-1747), and will receive instruction on the context out of which these pivotal works grew and their influence on later natural history.

Participants will develop individual projects related to topics selected in advance of the course, choosing their own materials to study. Projects may focus on a theme (e.g. voyages of discovery, natural history collections), on a particular object (e.g. a sketchbook, a letter, a three-dimensional object inspired by nature), or on group of holdings in the collection. Facilitated by library staff and the course instructors, participants will discuss and refine their ideas during the course of the workshop.

COURSE LEADERS

The course will be conducted by two leading scholars of the work of Merian and Catesby who are also experts in the evolution of natural history illustration and its influence on the development of natural history and biological science:

- Kay Etheridge, Professor of Biology at Gettysburg College. Author of *The Flowering of Ecology: Maria Sibylla Merian's caterpillar book* (Brill, forthcoming)
- Henrietta McBurney Ryan, independent art historian and curator, formerly curator at the Royal Library, Windsor Castle. Author of *Illuminating Natural History: The Art and Science of Mark Catesby* (Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, forthcoming)

CONFIRMED GUEST LECTURER

- Leslie K. Overstreet, Curator of Natural-History Rare Books, Smithsonian Libraries



AIM OF COURSE AND ELIGIBILITY

The course will utilize a wide range of books, manuscripts, art and artefacts that Rachel Lambert Mellon collected over her lifetime. These resources will be used to stimulate, inform and offer new channels of research to scholars. The course is suitable for professionals from diverse backgrounds, including historians of science, art, books, collecting and related fields. The course is mainly directed at applicants in the early stages of their career (e.g., senior doctoral students, post-docs, junior faculty with less than three years' experience), but applications from others at different career stages will also be considered. International applicants are welcome, but fluency in English is necessary.

FEES AND LOCATION

The fees for the ten days of the workshop, including accommodation and meals are: \$100 (graduate students), \$250 (post-docs), \$500 (faculty members).

Location will be the Oak Spring Garden Foundation in Upperville, Virginia. Participants will be accommodated with meals and private lodging on site at Oak Spring. Participants are responsible for arranging their own travel.

ABOUT THE OAK SPRING GARDEN FOUNDATION (OSGF)

OSGF is a philanthropic foundation based on the former estate of the late Paul and Rachel Mellon, two of the leading U.S. philanthropists of the second half of the twentieth century. OSGF is located in the northern Virginia Piedmont and Blue Ridge Mountains region (ca. one-hour drive from Washington, D.C.). Led by Sir Peter Crane FRS, the Foundation's inaugural President, OSGF is an ideal venue for small conferences, workshops, and retreats. It is evolving into a new research and study center of stimulation focused on all things botanical, from fundamental research in plant evolution and conservation, to horticultural and plant conservation practice, to the history and art of plants, gardens and landscapes.

APPLICATION

Interested individuals should apply by filling out the following [short online form](#). If you do not have a Gmail account and are unable to access the form, please see the questions on the next page of this flier and answer them in an email to programs@osgf.org.

Application will be considered on a competitive basis beginning 13th December 2019. Results of the application process will be finalized no later than 15th January 2020.

Images used:

Left: Merian, *Metamorphosis...*, pl. 2

Right: Catesby, *Natural History...*, II, pl. 60

Pioneers of Natural History Short Course

Thank you for applying to the Pioneers of Natural History Short Course at Oak Spring Garden Foundation in Upperville, Virginia, to be held 10-19 June 2020.

Please complete the following application by Friday December 13th, 2019. We plan to respond to all applicants by no later than January 31st 2020.

To find out more about the program, please visit: www.OSGF.org/opportunities and view the flier under "Special Opportunities."

If you are unable to fill out this form because you do not have a Gmail account – please answer these questions in an email to programs@osgf.org.

The name and photo associated with your Google account will be recorded when you upload files and submit this form. Not max@osgf.org? [Switch account](#)

* Required

Email Address *

Your answer

Full Name *

Your answer

Current Title *

Your answer

Current Organization *

Your answer

How did you hear about the program? *

Your answer

Please attach a two-page Curriculum Vitae that includes a description of your research interests *

[ADD FILE](#)

Briefly describe a topic related to the course that you would like to research during your time at Oak Spring. To assist you with the latter, we suggest that you review the digitized catalogs available at <https://issuu.com/osgf> *

Your answer

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