Roses in Art and Design

A photocopy of Bock's 1551 woodcut, from Krussman's Complete Book of Roses (Portland, 1981), shows the transition from decorative stylization to naturalism in 16th century botanical illustration. It lies on a page from The Concise British Flora in Color (London, 1965) which shows the same lively mix of description and decoration.

New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art recently issued a collection of note cards based on rose images in its collection. The box shows a Spanish ball gown, designed by Balenciaga. On the box is a Fantin-Latour still life. The other works, clockwise, are by: Eugene Chauvigne; Franklin Watkins; George Lambdin; Paul de Longpre; Raoul Dufy; a late Victorian cotton pattern designer, a painter of the Ch'ing dynasty; Edward Steichen; Van Gogh; and Nicolaes van Veerendaal.

The top row of images includes images from three 1998 calendars: an Ernst Haas photograph; a Charles Rennie Mackintosh printed textile design; and a Tiffany Rose window. Also shown are a rubber stamp adapted from a Mackintosh bookplate and a decorative rosebud border from Jugend, 1904, copied from Fisher's The Companion to Roses (Topsfield, MA, 1986).

The images shown in the exhibit are a small sample of the vast gallery of rose paintings, both in the pages of the newly donated books, and in the UCSC art book and slide collections. The iconography of the rose had multiple meanings both in medieval Christian art and architecture, and in the Renaissance. Its rich light and color appear in still-lifes and landscapes of many of the Impressionists. Among the artists whose work could have been shown here: Luini, Schongauer, Durer, Grandville, Corot, Manet, Renoir, Monet, Vuillard, Gris, Dali, Morandi, Balthus, Magritte, and Thiebaud.

Portraits of Roses

The library's largest display cases are tall enough to allow us to show the grandest volumes in the new rose book collection. At the upper left of each case is a volume from Old Garden Roses (London, 1955-) series, magnificently illustrated by Charles Raymond. Part 1, by Sacheverell Sitwell and James Russell is in the right case; Part 2, by Wilfred Blunt and Russell is in the left. The Peace Rose portrait at top left center is by Jirina Kaplicka in Svoboda's Beautiful Roses (London, 1965). One of the finest modern editions of Redoute was published by Ariel Press (London, 1954); two plates from this edition are shown to the right of the Svoboda volume.

At top center of the right hand case is a fine water color portrait, by Joyce Blake, of a rose named Sonia, illustrating Sam McGredy's Look to the Rose (New York, 1981). Behind this book to the right is another superb water color portrait, by Lotte Gunthart, in a Swiss volume Von Ruhn der Rose (Ruschlikon-Zurich, 1962). Also in this case is a fine glass rose and vase on loan for the exhibit from Michael and Eileen Tanner. The lower right shelf is crowded with about fifty other rose books which were transplanted from Browns Valley Road to the University Library collections last year.

This exhibit was curated by Alan Ritch, Head of Collection Planning at McHenry Library. If you have questions or comments please write him at: aritch@cats.ucsc.edu

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