

*Bee Dance*  
*or,*  
*The Consequences of Collecting*

Plimsoll Gallery, Hobart, 21-30 November, 2008

*Bee Dance or, The Consequences of Collecting*, is an exhibition of prints by Australian artist John Ingleton which explores the links between the collecting of plants by the French explorations of Bruni D'Entrecasteaux and Nicolas Baudin and their subsequent impact on the French environment.

The original intention of the artists was to explore the links between the collecting and propagating of Australian plants by the French and the introduction of Australian floral motifs into French design. Research showed that there was a gap between the production of Redoute's images for Josephine's book, *Le Jardin de Malmaison*, in 1803 and these plants appearing as motifs in French design during the Belle Epoch, which could not be explained from material available in Australia. It became apparent that more research of original material in the archives of various museums and businesses in France was necessary to pursue this project so the focus was narrowed to deal solely with the environmental impact of this transplanted flora.

The early French explorations of Australia resulted in 1000's of plant specimens being collected and returned to France where, known as the Labillardiere collection, they were stored in the herbarium at the Jardin de Plantes. Drawings were made, books of illustrations produced; some were propagated at the Jardin de Plantes and also by the Empress Josephine at her Chateau, Malmaison.

With only the first faint glimmerings of knowledge about genetics and no thought of environmental or ecological imperatives these early collectors removed plant material from Australia and other countries to facilitate a systematic ordering of plants using Linnaeus' recently developed categorisation. Much of it was transplanted into French soil with a variety of unknowable outcomes.

Some of these plants turned out to be environmental and ecological time bombs which are now impacting on French and other environments in southern Europe.

Of the thousands of specimens collected this work focuses on five;

- Eucalyptus
- Billardiera
- Callistemon
- Allocasuarina
- Acacia

Although the Eucalypt does not grow well north of the Pyrenees it has become problematic in many other areas, becoming a fire hazard and causing degrees of desertification. The Blackwood (and other varieties of Acacia) has taken over large area of southern France pushing out local species. It is now classed as an invasive species.

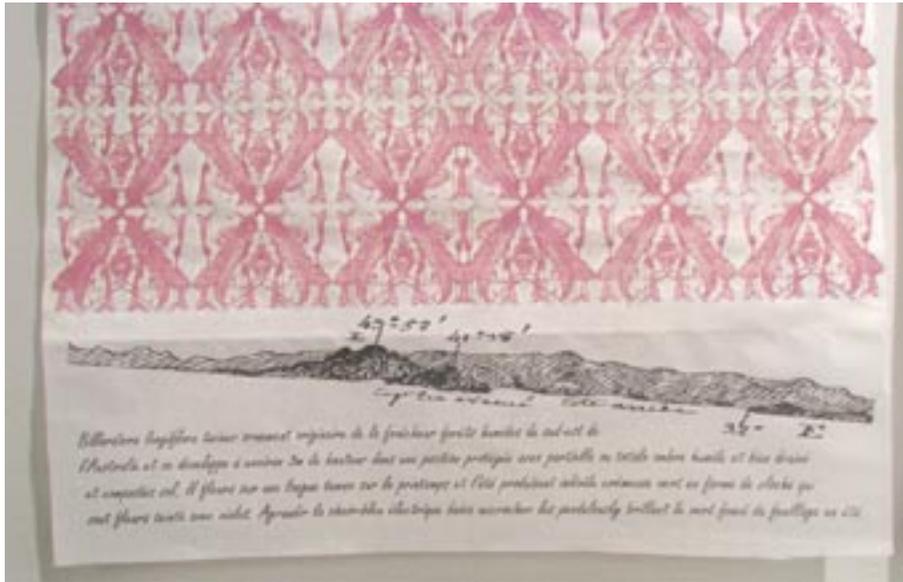
This project uses these two distinct periods in history - circa 1800, the age of enlightenment (when science was young and everything seemed possible) and circa 2000, the age of concern (when we begin to understand the ignorance and folly of our forebears) - as the basis for developing a body of work which communicates these different understandings of the world which we inhabit. The artist has chosen to use Napoleon's emblematic bee as a metaphor for this ongoing process.



*Collection* - Lithographic and digital prints (with woodblock) on Velata Avorio paper, Perspex, MDF, 22 x 180 x 4cm, 2008



*Collection 2 (Cartographic)* - screen-print and digital print on Wenzhou paper - 190 x 212cm

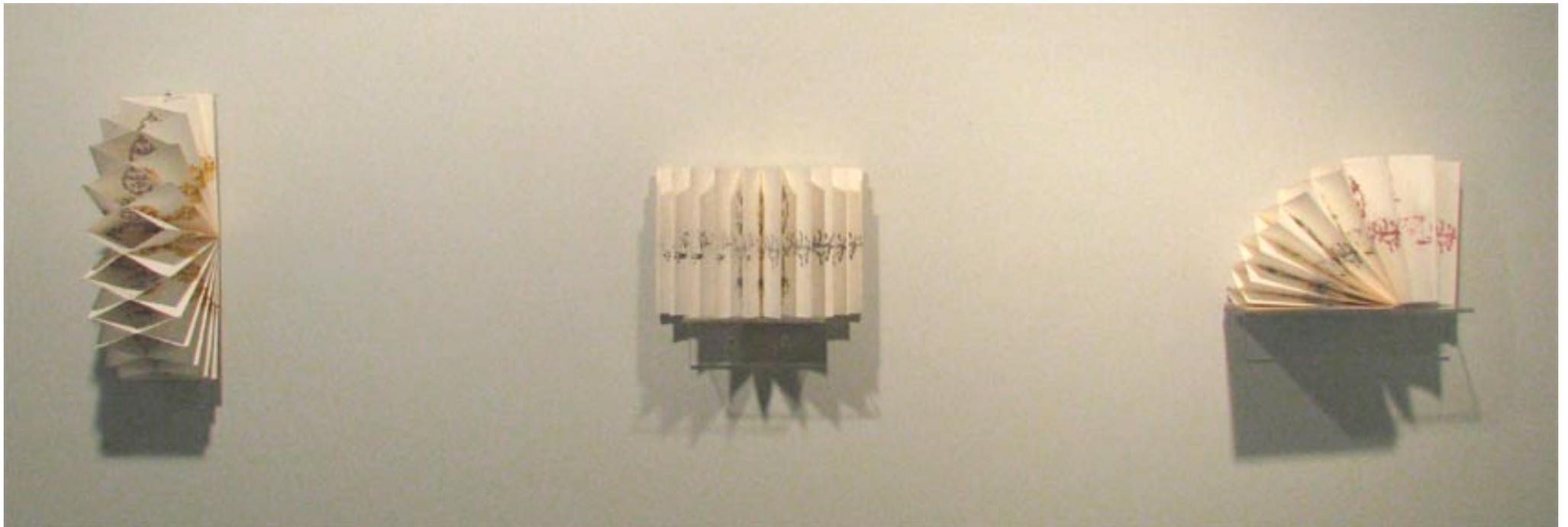


Collection 2 (Cartographic) - detail



Collection 3  
(Bibliographic) - detail

Collection 3 (Bibliographic) - lithographic and digital prints on Levata Avorio paper, etched  
Perspex – 42 x 193 x 21cm, 2008





*Acculturation* - Screenprint on Wenzhou paper,  
175 x 350cm, 2008



*Bee Dance* - Digital print of original drypoint etching on Vellin Arches paper on hardwood mount – 128 x 165 x 2.2cm, 2008



*Swarm* -screenprint on acetate, digital prints on Velata Avorio paper, MDF, fishing line –210 x 180 x 180cm, 2008

*Invasive* - screenprint on Wenzhou paper - 220 x 1500cm covers adjacent wall



*Swarm* - Detail



*Herbarium* - (detail)  
Eucalypt

Herbarium - etched Perspex, MDF, LED lights – 38 x 205 x 28cm, 2008



John Ingleton MFAD BFA (Hons)

3 Heathorn Avenue

Sandy Bay Tasmania 7005

Australia

Telephone: 61 03 6225 0332

Mobile: 0401067486

[lithographie@iprimus.com.au](mailto:lithographie@iprimus.com.au)

ABN 19 193 118 933

#### Print and Installation Artist

John Ingleton was born in Sydney and moved to Tasmania in 1991 after a successful career in sales and Marketing in Australia and overseas with Qantas. John was the founding President of the Hunter Island Press open access print studio in 2004 ([www.hunterislandpress.org.au](http://www.hunterislandpress.org.au)) and has exhibited regularly in Tasmania and mainland Australia since 2003. He has participated in both national and international print exchanges and touring exhibitions and was a finalist in the 2007 National art competition, *Drawing Together*. He uses a variety of mediums to talk about issues relating to the collecting and distribution of Australian flora and other topical issues.

His honours project incorporated research at the Hôtel de Soubise National Archives in Paris and the Collection Lesueur in le Havre to develop background material on the d'Entrecasteaux and Baudin expeditions for his thesis .

He is an active member of the Hunter Island Press committee and the Salamanca Art Centre's Executive Committee and has recently completed a Master of Fine Art and Design at the University of Tasmania

#### **Papers**

*Baudin and the Bees*, "Revelation" Conference, Tasmanian School of Art, March 26-27, 2007

## Historical context

The detailed mapping of Tasmania by French explorers, the "Labillardiere collection" of plants and the Lesueur Collection of images may never have existed except for the efforts of two Frenchmen separated in time and space by almost 50 years and 16,000 kilometres.

One, born into wealth and privilege in Dijon in 1709, was to write a book which, as Tom Ryan says, marked, '...a fundamental change in Western thinking about the human inhabitants of the South Seas...'<sup>1</sup>

The other, born in Cerilly in 1775, the son of a harness maker, was to play a significant role in the Baudin expedition of 1800-04.

Charles de Brosses studied law with a view to becoming a magistrate however, his main interests were in literature and science and he was to become one of the most significant French writers of the 18th century and a leading figure of the Enlightenment. He was a friend of the naturalist, mathematician, biologist, and cosmologist, the Comte de Buffon who was one of the early proponents of the idea of natural evolution.

In 1739 Buffon was elected an associate of the Academy of Sciences and was also appointed keeper of the Jardin du Roi (subsequently renamed the Jardin de Plantes) and of the Royal Museum. His greatest work was his *Histoire naturelle, générale et particulière*; which was published in Paris between 1749 and 1804 in forty-four quarto volumes. The 1911 edition of Encyclopaedia Britannica states that this publication, "...can undoubtedly claim the merit of having been the first work to present the previously isolated and apparently disconnected facts of natural history in a popular and generally intelligible form."<sup>2</sup>

His writing was to influence subsequent generations of scientists such as Jean-Baptiste Lamarck and Charles Darwin. In the foreword to the 6th edition of his *Origin of Species* Charles Darwin credited Buffon as, "the first author who in modern times has treated it (the theory of evolution) in a scientific spirit ..."

It was Buffon who encouraged the now, President Charles de Brosses, as the French Advocate and President of the Parliament of Dijon, to undertake the process of synthesising the existing knowledge about the Pacific and to publish it in a single publication. In a method similar to that of Buffon, and calling upon Charles de Vaugondy, one of the most respected and prolific cartographers of the time to draw up maps under his direction, he completed and published the two volume, *Histoire des Navigations aux Terres Australes* in 1756.

This publication was notable for many things; in it he propounded theories similar to those of Buffon regarding a common lineage for all mankind including the various peoples of the Pacific and, to circumvent the outlandish claims of some early explorers, he proposed that all future expeditions should carry a complement of scientists to authenticate the collection of data – a practice carried out by all subsequent expeditions by both the French and English. De Brosses also provided the first definitive description of the areas of Polynesia and Australasia.

The other Frenchman of interest is Francois Peron a man from a working class background. He enlisted in the revolutionary army in 1792, lost an eye in action on the Rhine and was eventually taken prisoner at Kaiserslautern. Invalided out of the army in 1794 he returned to Paris and began three years of medical studies. He also developed an interest in natural history from time spent in the Paris museum. Hearing of the expedition to Terres Australes to be led by Nicolas Baudin he pestered authorities until, sponsored by Antoine de Jussieu, professor of botany at the Jardin des Plantes, he was appointed to the position of natural historian and anthropologist. In the event Baudin proved to be a better natural anthropologist than Peron who was unable to remain objective in the face of the mood swings amongst the aboriginal people of van Diemen's Land<sup>3</sup>

Peron proved to be a major trial for Baudin because of his enthusiastic rushing about at every opportunity with little regard for the instruction of his captain. However, I believe we owe him a debt of gratitude for his mentoring of the artists Nicolas-Martin Petit and Charles-Alexandre Lesueur who provided some of the most memorable ethnographic and natural history images of any expedition to Australia plus an immense collection of more than 100,000 specimens including 2,500 of new species.

Peron wrote the first volume of the official report on Baudin's voyage, *Voyage de découvertes aux Terres Australes*, before succumbing to tuberculosis in 1810.

James Walker points out that, if the King of France had not been so preoccupied with maintaining his naval power against the English in other areas of the world it is, '...quite possible that to her and not to England, would have fallen the dominion of Australia'<sup>4</sup>

One of those areas of contention was the Caribbean, a place so important to the King that he was prepared to give up his Canadian assets to maintain his hold on this collection of islands. And, strange as it may seem, it was from these islands that a woman came who was to have a huge influence on the future direction of France including the capture, propagation and distribution of flora and fauna from all around the world but especially from Australia.

From an Anglo-centric perspective it is perhaps difficult to comprehend that the French and not the English did more to propagate information about the new flora from the other side of the world. Étienne Pierre Ventenat's, *Jardin de La Malmaison* was first published in 1803, and Labillardiere's, *Novae Hollandiae Plantarum Specimen* published in 1807 was the first publication to describe and illustrate the flora of Australia. While Banks spent thousands of pounds of his own money having engravings made from Sydney Parkinson's sketches and paintings from Cook's first voyage these were not published until the 1980's as *Banks' Florilegium*<sup>5</sup>

The Tasmanian Blue Gum, *Eucalyptus globulus* was named by Labillardiere and it was also a Frenchman named Charles Louis L'Héritier who identified and named the species *Eucalyptus* from a specimen of *Eucalyptus obliqua* held at the Natural History Museum in London.

While Bruni D'Entrecasteaux's explicit instructions were to search for the lost La Perouse he would have been aware of the writings of de Brosses, Buffon, Rousseau and Voltaire and the French government who approved Bougainville's secret settlement plans in 1764<sup>6</sup> would undoubtedly have advised him to be on the lookout for potential areas for settlement.

His unexpected discovery of the area around Recherche Bay and the D'Entrecasteaux Channel in Terre de Diemen are well documented. What is less well known is that the gardener on his expedition, Felix Delahaye, the man who planted the so called "French Garden", and who, together with Jacques Labillardiere, during their five week visit, collected, '...some 5000 specimens comprising thirty genera and about 100 new species.'<sup>7</sup> He was later to propagate and care for many of these same plants in the garden of the woman from Martinique.

Delahaye was unable to return to France until 1797 after which he became in turn the chief gardener at the châteaux the Grand Trianon and Malmaison and then, in 1814 after the death of his patron, a private nurseryman..

In the time he had been away France had had a revolution and, within two years, was to be ruled by a man who would choose Childéric's golden bees, an ancient symbol of royalty in France, and a metaphor for a Republic of equals under a single leader, as a heraldic symbol to trump the Bourbon fleur-de-lys. This man was also to commission Baudin to continue the exploration of New Holland on behalf of the French government.

It was France under Napoleon who set about establishing the first Musée de L'Homme (museum of man) and gave Baudin specific instructions regarding the collection of ethnographic material during his voyage.

Napoleon's first wife, Joséphine de Beauharnais formerly of Martinique was a gifted amateur naturalist who, perhaps because she had grown up amongst exotic species, being fascinated by the newly discovered species from Australasia, began establishing them along with every other variety of plant that she could obtain at her chateau Malmaison which was on the outskirts of Paris.

Although many plants were sourced from the Labillardiere collection and despite ongoing war with England, Josephine was able to procure a steady supply of plant material from her English contacts. On his appointment as head gardener at Malmaison Delahaye would probably also have contributed specimens from his own extensive collection<sup>8</sup>

Not content with growing these plants for her own amusement Josephine wanted to spread them all over France. Jill Duchess of Hamilton quotes her as saying, '...I wish that Malmaison may soon become the source of riches for all the départements...I have planted...trees and shrubs from Australia'<sup>9</sup>. It was her intention to create botanical gardens all over France along the lines of her gardens in Malmaison.<sup>10</sup> To promote her ideas Josephine commissioned a book about these exotic plants with illustrations provided by

the best and most expensive botanical illustrator of the time Pierre-Joseph Redoute. Almost 30% of the images in this publication portrayed Australian flora.

While not devaluing the line drawings in Labillardiere's book or Redoute's earlier prints it should be noted that the images in *Jardin de la Malmaison* are probably the first published artistic impressions of these plants. Executed originally as brilliantly coloured paintings they were subsequently produced as prints, engraved under Redoute's direction, by François Noël Sellier using a method called stipple engraving which, for the first time allowed for the subtle tones of the paintings to be reproduced by the printer. It would be a long time before the unusual forms of the Australian flora made another appearance in the art of France.

The dearth of information about these plants and those at the Jardin de Plantes and of Joséphine's plans to distribute plants to every Département in France could be taken to indicate that their novelty value disappeared along with the Empress. However, one can say with certainty that the acacia which, along with the rose, was so favoured by Joséphine did have a major impact on French culture. Both it and the Eucalypt were to become important in the perfume industry and as an essential oil respectively. They were to reappear in the designs of La Belle Epoque through to Art Nouveau.

Josephine's fascination with new and exotic plant species was to have unforeseen consequences for the local environment. As we are now discovering, all plants naturally exist in surroundings which control their existence in balance with other local species. Once removed from this situation to another environment their future becomes unpredictable.

Known to the French as Mimosa, the delicate phyllodes and fragrant perfume of the Acacia was to become even more popular than it was with the English. It became an essential part of the perfume industry and was widely planted in the south along the Riviera.

The first mimosa to be planted in the south of France was *Acacia farnesiana*, which is a native of Central America. It reached the Alpes-Maritimes in the 18th century but, although this type of Mimosa is especially suited for perfumes, it is not frost hardy and was replaced by the Australian species *Acacia dealbata* (70%), *Acacia retinoides* (20%), *hybrides* (8%) and *Acacia podalyriifolia* (2%).<sup>11</sup> Having found a suitable environment, the mimosa extended throughout the Massif des Maures and progressively replaced the local vegetation: cork oaks, l'arbousier and the heather.

Today boulevards along the Cote d'Azur are planted with acacia comprising up to 20 different Australian species, including hybrids<sup>12</sup> and the "The Mimosa Trail" has become an important part of the local tourist calendar.

John Ingleton

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> T. Ryan. *Le Presidente des Terres Australes* in *The Journal of Pacific History*, Vol 37 No. 2, 2002. P176

<sup>2</sup>[http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/1911\\_Encyclop%C3%A6dia\\_Britannica/Bufon%2C\\_George\\_Louis\\_Leclerc%2C\\_Comte\\_de](http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/1911_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica/Bufon%2C_George_Louis_Leclerc%2C_Comte_de)

<sup>3</sup> Fornasiero, Jean. Monteath, Peter. West-Sooby, Jean (eds), *Encountering Terra Australis*, Wakefield Press, Kent Town, South Australia. 2004. p364

<sup>4</sup> James R walker *op cit* p5

<sup>5</sup> *Banks' florilegium* Alecto Historical Editions in association with the British Museum (Natural History), London 1981-1988

<sup>6</sup> T Ryan *op cit* p177

<sup>7</sup> E. Duyker. *A French Garden in Tasmania* in *Pacific Journeys*, Cropp et al Eds., Victoria University Press, Wellington 2005 p25

<sup>8</sup> Duyker E *op cit* p32

<sup>9</sup> Jill, Duchess of Hamilton, *Napoleon, The Empress and the Artist*, Kangaroo Press, N.S.W. 1999

<sup>10</sup> HRH Princess Michael of Kent, [http://www.princessmichael.com/articles/19\\_1.html](http://www.princessmichael.com/articles/19_1.html) 180307

<sup>11</sup> Mimosa – Introduction to France [http://www.acacia-world.net/html/mimosa\\_-\\_introduction\\_to\\_franc.html](http://www.acacia-world.net/html/mimosa_-_introduction_to_franc.html) 230606

<sup>12</sup> *Australian Acacias in Europe*, Lecture by Wolf-Achim Roland [http://www.acacia-world.net/html/lecture\\_melbourne.html](http://www.acacia-world.net/html/lecture_melbourne.html) 230606