

8 June 2021

Love, tyranny, and terrariums: exhibition explores our obsession with plants

Plant fever is raising the temperature at State Library of Queensland with the opening of the latest must-see exhibition on 12 June.

Entwined: plants and people explores our relationship with the botanical world through immersive projections that will soothe the senses, fascinating photography, historic illustrations, and stories that provide insights into the state's unique plant life.

Opening day (10am–2pm) activities include plant-themed markets, workshops in botanical embroidery and mini terrariums, gong meditations with artists Man&Wah and First Nations bush foods demonstrations.

With COVID-19 confining people to their homes and suburbs, interest in the plant world has never been stronger, so State Library has dug into its enormous collection of botanical illustrations and stories to captivate and inspire plant lovers of all ages.

Learn the story behind *Banks' Florilegium*, illustrations of plants collected on Cook's voyage on the *HMS Endeavour*. Botanist Joseph Banks had engravers create 738 copperplates of the drawings, but they were not printed until more than 200 years after his death, in one of the biggest publishing projects in history. Only one hundred copies were created, and one edition is held by State Library.

In the 1800s Australia was caught up in global Orchid fever, otherwise known as orchid fever. The wealthy sent plant hunters all over the world in search of new varieties of orchids, eventually driving several species to the edge of extinction.

The exhibition also reveals how some Aboriginal women rubbed ash from the burnt bark of the Batwing Coral Tree on pale-skinned babies to stop welfare officials removing them from their families (pre-1970s).

Highlights

- Man&Wah's *Quantum Metamorphosis*: a visual and sonic meditation intertwining water, air, fire, earth, and the ether. A re-imagining of botanical illustrations from the 15th–18th centuries.
- The rare *Queensland Nineteenth Century Fern Album* 1883–1884
- Traditional weaving, fibre art and contemporary fashion (eg bush fascinators made from spinifex and Bicornual baskets)
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander fishing tools (eg: Wujal Wujal mullet spears) and rainforest shields made from plants
- Rare photos and items from environmental protests (eg: Daintree blockade)
- Untold stories of female botanical illustrators

Quotes from State Librarian and CEO Vicki McDonald AM:

“Queenslanders love plants; a walk in the botanical garden or a spot of weeding in a veggie patch can enliven our senses and connect us to the natural world.”

“*Entwined: people and plants* provides a chance to reflect on that relationship and how important it is to our very survival.”

“Like so much of history, this exhibition highlights a collision of narratives. *Banks’ Florilegium* was an impressive achievement of Enlightenment Europe, but Captain Cook’s voyage set off a chain of events which led to the dispossession of Australia’s traditional owners.”

“I invite you to pause, breathe, and reflect on the complexity and beauty of plants in our latest life-affirming exhibition.”

Entwined: plants and people

12 Jun – 14 Nov

Open daily 10am–5pm | Free entry

slq Gallery, level 2 | State Library of Queensland, Cultural Centre, South Bank

slq.qld.gov.au/whats-on | #slqEntwined

Images available here: <https://spaces.hightail.com/space/uJWQIScQgf>