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**VICTORIA MUNROE**  
fine art

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**DRAWN FROM SCIENCE**

Barbara Regina Dietzsch (1706-1783), The circle of Mary Delany (1700-1788), Commandant Julien Lignier (1872-1932)  
January 26 – March 9, 2024



Booth Grey (1740-1802), *Tropaeolum majus* -  
*Nasturtium*, watercolor collage on laid paper



Barbara Regina Dietzsch (Nuremberg, 1706-1783),  
*Géranium, goauche* on vellum



Commandant Julien Lignier (1872-1932), *Borago*  
(*Borago officinalis* L.), watercolor, ink on paper

On view January 26 through March 9, 2024, Victoria Munroe Fine Art is pleased to present **DRAWN FROM SCIENCE**, featuring three artists who depict botanical specimens in uniquely captivating styles, all on dramatic black backgrounds. A concurrent exhibition features **CHRISTIAN SARDET: drawings by a biologist about the origin and evolution of life**. A separate press release is available for that exhibition.

The earliest artworks in this exhibition are by **Barbara Regina Dietzsch (1706-1783)**, a Nuremberg artist who primarily painted a single gouache botanical on vellum with butterflies and beetles alighting. Her contemporary, **Mary Delany (1700-1788)**, inspired a former member of British Parliament, **Booth Grey (1740-1802)**, to create similarly composed botanical specimens in the 1790s with Delany's innovative "paper-mosaick" collage technique. Over a century later, French Commandant **Julien Lignier (1872-1932)** spent his retirement recording the flora and fungi, and corresponding plant diseases, across France.

Born on September 22, 1706, in Nuremberg, **Barbara Regina Dietzsch** was the eldest in an artistic family in which her father, the landscape painter Johann Israel Dietzsch, taught her to paint with gouache on vellum. While the natural subjects in Dietzsch's opaque watercolor paintings are rendered with great care and accuracy, her compositional choices and inclusion of bugs from the life cycle of the plant and other narrative elements elevate her paintings above the standard scientific illustrations of the day. Additionally, her focus on the beauty of nature seems rooted in an 18th century Protestant movement which held that the splendor and order of nature proved the existence of a virtuous God and that the contemplation of nature is a way of honoring this belief. Dietzsch achieved great acclaim during her lifetime.

"I have invented a new way of imitating flowers," **Mary Delany (1700-1788)** wrote to her niece in 1772. Delany, an English bluestocking, created a method she called "paper-mosaick" by which she would cut colored papers into the petals, stems, and other botanical elements and collage them onto a washed black ink background with additional watercolor details and shading. This practice achieves a highly realistic specimen, closely resembling a pressed flower. Her subject brought her proximity to botanists and scientists interested in the new Linnaean classification system. Popular with her contemporaries, she inspired others with her technique. **Booth Grey (1740-1802)**, an English politician, had a familial connection to Mary Delany and, on at least one occasion, he sent a botanical specimen to Delany to use as a subject for her collages. This group of collages is attributed to Booth Grey, created around the 1790s after he retired as an elected member of the House of Commons.

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Commandant **Julien Lignier's** (1872-1932), an amateur mycologist, made thousands of botanical watercolors in the last years of his life a portion of which (numbers 1-1028) are in the collection of the Museum of Natural History (Paris), Botanical Library. A career member of the French military, Lignier voluntarily enlisted at the age of 20 and rose through the ranks, later receiving the honorific title of *chevalier* of the Legion of Honor in recognition for his role in military campaigns against Germany starting in 1914. Not much is known about his artistic endeavors over his lifetime, but it is clear he devoted multiple years, primarily after the end of his military service in 1922, to identifying and rendering botanical specimens and their corresponding diseases around eastern France. There is careful attention to scientific labeling and accuracy in his watercolors. However, he used great artistic license in the placement and perspective of the botanical subjects, many of which are situated off center on rectangular black backgrounds allowing space on the same drawing to reproduce the diseases of the plants he studied under his microscope.

Dietzsch, Grey, and Lignier approach the accuracy of their recorded specimens with scientific precision, each with a unique technique and process and with their own clear artistic expression.

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