

# Histoire Naturelle, Botanique

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1810-1830

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## Title Statement

Histoire Naturelle, Botanique Histoire Naturelle, Botanique MSS 16291

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## Publication Statement

**Publisher:** Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library

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## Profile Description

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## Descriptive Summary

**Unit ID**

MSS 16291

**Unit ID**

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**Unit ID**

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**Unit Date**

1810-1830

**Mixed Materials [X031660922]**

1 (Ledger)

**Language**

French

**Extent**

0.25 Cubic Feet 1 volume

**Repository**

Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library

## Administrative Information

**Conditions Governing Access**

Collection is open for research use.

### **Preferred Citation**

MSS 16291, Histoire Naturelle, Botanique, Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library, University of Virginia.

## **Biographical Note**

The author is anonymous save a monogram on the front cover: MR. The Notre Dame insignia on the back cover marks that this was the work of a convent member at the Augustinian Congrégation de Notre Dame Monastère dit des oiseaux.

Source: Revised from dealer description.

## **Scope and Contents**

Botanical manuscript from Paris (circa 1810-1830; 0.25 cubic feet). Bound manuscript on paper, folio (375 × 290 mm), 31 leaves, comprising title in blue and gold, 15 botanical watercolours and 15 leaves of calligraphic manuscript explanations within blue and gold ruled borders, all on heavy wove paper, tissue guards (these sometimes torn), all mounted on original guards. Contemporary red quarter morocco, red cloth sides, the upper cover with the monogramme MR, the lower cover with device of the Congrégation de Notre Dame. This is a large Botanical manuscript project completed by a young woman. The manuscript is organized according to the 15 botanical orders, with a page of description of each, with a facing watercolor. The plants illustrated include the lily, iris, gentian, cornflower, azalea, poppy, honeysuckle, plum and passion flower. This is both an educational and devotional production by a member of the Augustinian Congrégation de Notre Dame Monastère dit des oiseaux in the rue de Sèvres, Paris, and is anonymous save for a monogram on the upper cover.

The watercolours are finely executed, with painstaking attention to detail and the suspicion is that both text and images were the product of a particular kind of artistic education at the convent of Notre Dame. We are aware of at least two other examples of similar botanical manuscripts, with a different selection of flowers, but arranged in precisely the same format, with calligraphic titles—each signed by different women, and one dateable to 1810 (Christies, NY, 14 December 2016, lot 159).

As we know, flower painting was an art form both approved and encouraged among young women, especially in a devout Catholic context, developing qualities of devotion, attention to detail and patience; so, for example, the creation of a watercolour of the passion flower (Grenadille bleue) can be interpreted as a Christian meditation, the flower's complex structure a symbol of Christ's passion: including his scourging, crowning with thorns, the three nails and the five wounds. The large scale of these particular illustrations, coupled with the exceptional brushwork, allow an unusual degree of scientific exactitude. --revised from dealer description

## **Keywords**

Botany