



Maria Sibylla Merian and Daughters: Women of Art and Science

Ella Reitsma

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Maria Sibylla Merian and Daughters: Women of Art and Science Ella Reitsma

This gorgeously illustrated book presents the life and work of Maria Sibylla Merian, who defied the conventions of her time to pursue her passion for documenting the natural world in all its glorious, and sometimes ferocious, detail.

After more than fifteen years of marriage to a fellow artist and the birth of two daughters, Merian left her husband. She began to support herself by selling watercolors of insects, fruit, and flowers, eventually establishing an art business in Amsterdam with her daughters, Johanna Helen and Dorothea Maria. Merian's innovative compositional style--displaying the life cycle of an insect against the background of its host plant--developed out of her own careful and painstakingly recorded observations of insect metamorphoses.

Ella Rietsma is the first author to attempt to separate Merian's work from that of her two daughters, who collaborated extensively with their mother. Writing in a lively, accessible style, Reitsma includes newly discovered drawings and fresh biographical details. This book coincides with an exhibition of Merian's work on view at the J. Paul Getty Museum from June 10 through August 31, 2008.

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