

***British Watercolors: Flowers and Still-Life Painters*, April 27, 2009–October 1, 2009**

In nineteenth-century Britain, the versatility and availability of watercolor paints made it an ideal medium for professional and amateur practitioners alike to contemplate and explore the simple pleasures and profound wonders of the natural world. Balancing an empirical desire for "naturalism" and virtuosic attention to detail with intensely expressive visions, practitioners distinguished themselves by specializing in particular compositions or objects. They experimented with a broad range of contrasting techniques, from light translucent washes of color to opaque strokes of pigment augmented by gouache. Especially striking is stippling, the application of minute dots of color close together, which creates a diaphanous chromatic effect.

As portable as watercolor paints were, close observation in the studio was more common than accidental encounters in the wilderness. Some works were meticulous studies meant to be teaching aids, but most were intended for private consumption. From elegant simplicity to elaborate compositions, the works assembled here are meant to challenge the eye and inspire a greater understanding of the natural world.

Due to the remarkable generosity of an anonymous donor, The RISD Museum has one of the finest collections of 18th- and 19th-century British watercolors in this country. Rotating exhibitions of watercolors from this rarely-seen collection are on view in the Museum's Porcelain Gallery, home to an outstanding group of 18th-century figural ceramics donated by Miss Lucy Truman Aldrich in 1937. Now on view are works by British artists who specialized in painting flowers, fruits, birds and their nests. This subject matter appealed to both professional and amateur watercolorists, including a number of female artists.

## CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION

George Vicat Cole, British, 1833-1893

*Fern Landscape*, 1800s

Watercolor, gouache and pencil

Anonymous gift 1986.184.10



Jane Ogden, British, 1849-1901

*Bluebells and Primroses*, 1866

Watercolor and gouache

Gift of in memory of Susan Gotti from her family and friends  
1993.028



# RISD MUSEUM

William Henry Hunt, British, 1790-1864  
British  
*Flower Still Life*, after 1830  
Watercolor and gouache  
Gift of the Estate of Eleanor Fayerweather 1993.085.15



British; American  
*Mountain Pasture*, late 1800s  
Watercolor and gouache  
Gift of the Estate of Eleanor Fayerweather 1993.085.19



William Hough, British, 1819-1897  
*Plums*, Mid 1800s-Late 1800s  
Watercolor and gouache on paper  
Gift of the Estate of Eleanor Fayerweather 1993.085.8



Edwin Alexander, Scottish, 1870-1926  
*Blue Tit on Laburnum*, late 1800s  
Watercolor and gouache on tan paper  
Anonymous gift 2005.142.68



# RISD MUSEUM

John Ruskin, English, 1819-1900  
*Study of a Hawthorne in Flower*, 1800s  
Watercolor and pencil  
Anonymous gift 71.153.14



John Ruskin, English, 1819-1900  
*A Spray of Juniper Berries*, ca. 1863  
Watercolor, white heightening and gouache on blue paper  
Anonymous gift 71.153.55



Walter Crane, British, 1845-1915  
*Woman (probably Mrs. Crane) in a Garden*, ca.1900-05  
Watercolor and gouache on cream paper  
Gift of Houghton P. Metcalf, Jr. 77.137



# RISD MUSEUM

Edwin Alexander, Scottish, 1870-1926  
*Capanula*, late 1800s  
Watercolor and gouache on grey paper  
Anonymous gift 80.239.3

