

***Les Roses* remains the cornerstone in the historical study of this favorite flower, as well as the unequaled peak of its artistic depiction.**

Pierre-Joseph Redouté, *Les Roses*. Paris: Firmin Didot, 1817–1824. 3 volumes, each measuring 21 5/8 x 14 1/8 (550 x 360 mm), 410 pages. Engraved portrait of Redouté by Pradier after Gerard, engraved wreath, and 169 plates printed in color and finished by hand.

Pierre-Joseph Redouté is perhaps the most popular botanical painter of all, thanks largely to the 170 plates collected in the three volumes of *Les Roses* (1817–24). Redouté (1759–1840) came from a family of many generations of painters and studied under the botanist Charles-Louis L'Héritier de Brutelle, who persuaded him that the best botanical illustrations were the result of an expert knowledge of living things. For the last fifty years of his life Redouté served as drawing master to the queens and princesses of France, from Marie-Antoinette to Marie-Amelie. His drawings adorned a series of lavishly illustrated books by leading French botanists that covered a wide range of subjects from garden plants to forest trees and succulents.

Roses, however, are the most familiar subject of his works, owing to the outstanding quality of his artistry and the devotion of so many gardeners to this group of shrubs. Among these enthusiasts was the Empress Josephine, whose garden at Malmaison contained over 200 varieties of roses, many of which Redouté painted for his book. Still grown today is a rose with fragrant, pinkish-white flowers called “Souvenir de la Malmaison,” which commemorates both Josephine’s garden and the West Indian island of Martinique where she was born. Not all the roses depicted in *Les Roses* came from Malmaison, however; Redouté and the author of the descriptive text, Claude-Antoine Thory selected varieties from the national gardens at Paris, Sèvres, and Versailles and from the gardens of nurserymen and knowledgeable amateurs.

This a remarkable large-paper copy from the Warnock Library is bound in contemporary red quarter morocco with gilt lettering on the spines. Redouté’s inscription on the half-title reads “Cette exemplaire est un des premier triage et des plus beaux” (This copy is one of the most choice and beautiful). Redouté indicates that he did the hand finishing himself. This is the copy from which the Schutter Facsimile (Antwerp, 1974–1978) was

prepared.

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