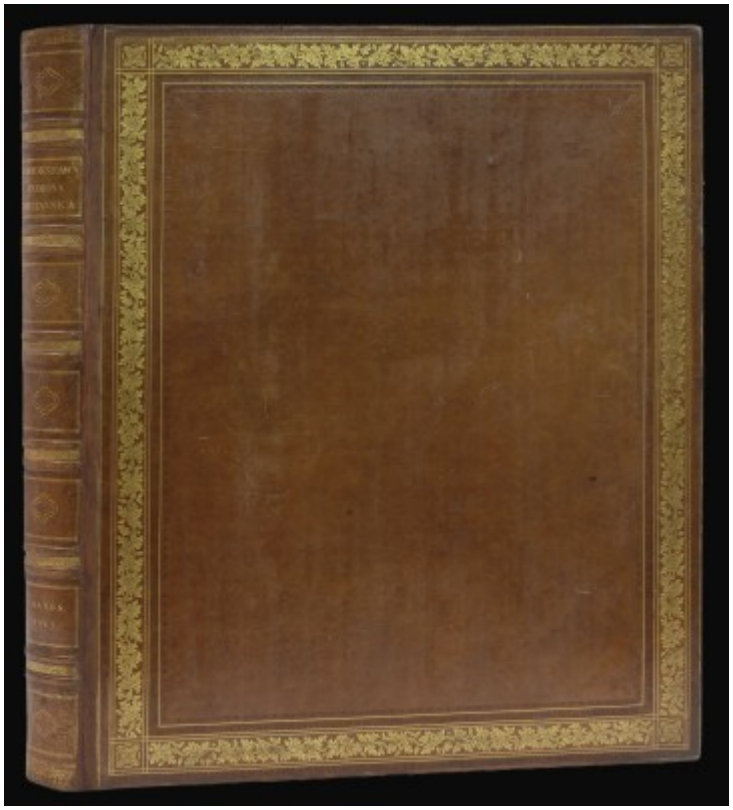


Folio Large (580 by 460 mm), 90 aquatint and stipple-engraved plates after G. Brookshaw, printed in colour and finished by hand, numbered 1-93 (without plates 39, 42 and 46 as issued; plates 4, 5, 60, and 66 without the plate number or title; plates 45, 64, 83 erroneously numbered 55, 65 and 80), with the author's printed slip explaining the absence of three pineapple plates, one page index, contemporary diced russia, gilt and blind stamped, with a leafy oak roll tool, within a large gilt and blind rolled border, spine gilt in 7 compartments, gilt lettered in 2, edges gilt.

BROOKSHAW'S 'POMONA BRITANNICA'

Pomona Britannica; or, a Collection of the most esteemed fruits at present cultivated in this country.

Author
BROOKSHAW, George

Publication date
[1804-] 1812.

Publisher
T. Bensley for the author, published by White, Cochrane and Co., E. Lloyd and W. Lindsell,

Publication place
London,

Physical description
Folio Large (580 by 460 mm), 90 aquatint and stipple-engraved plates after G. Brookshaw, printed in colour and finished by hand, numbered 1-93 (without plates 39, 42 and 46 as issued; plates 4, 5, 60, and 66 without the plate number or title; plates 45, 64, 83 erroneously numbered 55, 65 and 80), with the author's printed slip explaining the absence of three pineapple plates, one page index, contemporary diced russia, gilt and blind stamped, with a leafy oak roll tool, within a large gilt and

blind rolled border, spine gilt in 7 compartments, gilt lettered in 2, edges gilt.

Dimensions

Notes
First edition of one of the finest colour plate books in existence, “surely the only fruit book to rival the showy quality of the flowers in Thornton’s Temple of Flora” (Oak Spring Pomona 40a). Only plate 48 carries an engraver’s name, that of H. Merke. Nissen also credits Richard Brookshaw, the author’s elder brother, who was a popular mezzotint engraver in France: his plates in the Pomona, dated 1804, are his last recorded works.

The Pomona marked the re-emergence of George Brookshaw into the public eye after a total disappearance of nearly a decade. Until recently little had been known of Brookshaw’s life, but in a recent article (“George Brookshaw: The case of the vanishing cabinet-maker”, Apollo, May 1991) Lucy Wood has uncovered many details in the remarkable story of a man who began his career as a celebrated cabinet-maker and died a relatively unappreciated botanical artist — and seems to have deliberately obscured many of the connections between his two personae. Brookshaw, born in Birmingham and married to the daughter of a prosperous Birmingham gunsmith, moved to London in 1777 to embark on a career as a cabinet-maker. By 1783 he had attracted the patronage of the Prince of Wales and other prominent members of society; his furniture was noted for its all-over painted decoration with figurative, landscape and, above all, floral themes. An inscription on one of his bills presented to the Prince of Wales in 1783 describes him as a “Peintre Ebiniste par Extraordinaire.”

In spite of this success, no record survives of any furniture made by him after the mid-1790s. At this point, Lucy Wood suggests that a financial or sexual scandal drove him to live and work under a false name and precipitated his embarkation on an entirely new career. She believes that A New Treatise on Flower Painting, published anonymously in 1797 and later (in the third edition of 1799) in the name of G. Brown, was actually by Brookshaw, whose A Supplement to the Treatise on Flower Painting published in 1817 has largely the same content — including 11 plates supposedly by Brookshaw but identical to those in the earlier work, where they are attributed to Brown. Blanche Henrey (II, pp. 595-8), although not reaching the same conclusion, also draws attention to the similarity of the two works and the fact that Brookshaw makes no acknowledgement of Brown’s work, as well as to the conspicuous lack of biographical details for either man.

The Pomona was first issued in parts from 1804 to 1808 (apart from two plates dated 1812) and, if Wood’s hypothesis is correct, is the first resumption by Brookshaw using his own name, as well as the first public indication of his new métier. The first edition of the complete work was published in 1812 and was dedicated to the Prince Regent, Brookshaw’s most distinguished former patron. Many of the specimens were taken from the Royal Gardens at Hampton Court and Kensington Gardens. Other gardens mentioned in the text are those of the Princess of Wales at Blackheath, the Duke of York at Oatlands, the Duke of Marlborough at Sion, Dr. Lettsom at Camberwell, Lord Anson at Moor Park and Benjamin Goldsmid at Roehampton. The work took Brookshaw nearly ten years to produce, and the immense amount of planning necessary to co-ordinate the text and the plates is apparent from Brookshaw’s note to his readers concerning the illustrations of the pineapples. Brookshaw explains: “Before the first numbers of this work were printed, it was necessary to determine as nearly as possible, how many plates each class of fruit would occupy, in order that they should be properly numbered, and the author having consulted the most experienced growers of pines, was advised to give eight: but when he came to delineate them, he found there were not more than five or six worth growing… and in consequence has omitted three that were recommended.” Thus text appears for “plates” 39, 42 and 46, where no illustrations were included. Similar problems of co-ordination may explain why a number of the descriptions of plates of plums (for instance, of plates

19 and 21) do not tally with the actual illustrations, which may have been modified after the text was printed.

Sadly, Brookshaw's work seems not to have attracted the attention of the prominent botanists of his day, despite the fact that in the second edition of his work he claims the support of Sir Joseph Banks. Brookshaw died in 1823 with less than…100 in his bank account – not a great deal considering that the first edition of the Pomona cost each subscriber nearly…60. The anonymous preface to his Horticultural Repository, published posthumously, relates that "although… undistinguished in his death, his latter days were passed in comfort; and although he died poor, he did not want." He left "one of the Copies of my Large Pomona Brittanica" to his daughter Caroline, as well as an instruction that his executor should try to recover money still owed to Brookshaw on the sale of the Pomona and other books, by his printers White and Co.

Bibliography
Dunthorne 50; Nissen BBI 244; Great Flower Book p. 52; Raphael Oak Spring Pomona 40a.

Provenance

Price:

Inventory reference: 12897

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