



## PRESS RELEASE

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### **ART LIBRARIANS HONOR *RACHEL RUYSCH: NATURE INTO ART* WITH 2024 GEORGE WITTENBORN MEMORIAL BOOK AWARD**

WESTFORD, Massachusetts – *Rachel Ruysch: Nature into Art* has been recognized by the Art Libraries Society of North America (ARLIS/NA) for excellence in art publishing. This publication was submitted for consideration by Diana Sibbald, Publications Coordinator, MFA Publications at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Established in 1980, the Wittenborn Award honors the memory of George Wittenborn, a premier New York art book dealer and publisher who was a prominent supporter of the Society in its formative years.

The monographic catalog *Rachel Ruysch: Nature into Art* highlights the female Dutch painter Rachel Ruysch (1664-1750) whose fruit and floral still lifes were famed across Europe. Published in conjunction with an exhibition of the same name, this catalog was produced by MFA Publications, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston and authored by Robert Schindler, Bernd Ebert, and Anna C. Knaap with contributions from Marianne Berardi, Charles C. Davis, Lieke van Deinsen, Josephina de Fouw, Nouchka de Keyser, Jordine Koenen, Bert van de Roemer, and Katharina Schmidt-Loske. The exhibition was organized by the Toledo Museum of Art, Alte Pinakothek, Munich, and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Coined “the most famous artist you have never heard of” by *The Art Newspaper*, Rachel Ruysch was the daughter of scientist Frederick Ruysch who apprenticed her to Willem van Aelst, a prominent flower still life painter. In addition to birthing ten children with fellow artist Juriaen Pool, she became the first female member of The Hague artist’s guild and served as a court artist to Johann Wilhelm II, Elector Palatine. Though highly regarded and paid handsomely for her work during her lifetime, she has been underserved by scholars. Until now. As the first extensive publication on Ruysch in over 70 years, this scholarly work introduces today’s audiences to Ruysch’s accomplishments and the significant roles played by women in the Dutch Republic during the 17th-18th centuries.

The Wittenborn Memorial Book Award recognizes only books that demonstrate the highest achievement in art publishing. *Rachel Ruysch: Nature into Art* is an outstanding example of scholarship and design that excels in all the required categories of content, documentation, layout, and format. This beautiful book immediately sets a moody vibe with its dark cloth-bound cover featuring a close-up of a botanical still life and “Rachel Ruysch” imprinted in copper foil. The reproductions are stunning, showcasing an incredible detail with vivid color contrasting the deep backgrounds of the still life paintings. The scholarly essays highlight Ruysch’s career and legacy while considering botanical art traditions. Green pages highlight the end matter which includes an inventory of native and nonnative flora and fauna depicted in Ruysch’s work in addition to a bibliography, notes, index, and a list of works.

The committee would also like to acknowledge three honorable mentions. First, *Tell Me a Story Where the Bad Girl Wins: The Life and Art of Barbara Shermund*, written by Caitlin McGurk, Curator of Comics and Cartoon Art at the Billy Ireland Cartoon Library & Museum, The Ohio State University and ARLIS/NA member, and published by Fantagraphics. This art book celebrates the work and legacy of Barbara Shermund, one of the first female cartoonists to write for magazines such as *The New Yorker*. Additionally, we recognize *The Shape of Power: Stories of Race and American Sculpture*, by Karen Lemmey, Tobias Wofford, & Grace Yasumura with contributions by Renée Ater, Jacqueline Francis, Elizabeth Hutchinson, Tess Korobkin, Jami Powell, James Smalls, & Claudia Zapata published by the Smithsonian American Art Museum in association with Princeton University Press. This catalog accompanies the Smithsonian American Art Museum’s groundbreaking exhibition examining how sculpture has shaped and reflected attitudes about race in the United States. Finally, we would like to acknowledge *Nancy Elizabeth Prophet: I Will Not Bend an Inch*, edited by Sarah Ganz Blythe, Dominic Molon, & Gazette Solomon and published by the Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design in association with Yale University Press. This exhibition catalog presents the first museum examination of this underrecognized Afro-Indigenous woman sculptor.

The members of the 2024 ARLIS/NA George Wittenborn Memorial Book Award Sub-Committee, representing the Ohio Valley chapter, were: Courtney Stine (chair), Karyn Hinkle, Alison L. Huftalen, Stefanie Hilles, and Bridget Retzlöff.

### **About the Art Libraries Society of North America**

Founded in 1972, the Art Libraries Society of North America (ARLIS/NA) is a dynamic,



international organization of close to 1,000 individuals devoted to fostering excellence in art and design librarianship and image management in the United States, Canada, and Mexico. The membership includes architecture and art librarians, visual resources professionals, artists, curators, educators, publishers, students, and others interested in visual arts information. To serve this diverse constituency, the Society provides a wide range of programs and services within an organizational structure that encourages participation at every level.

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