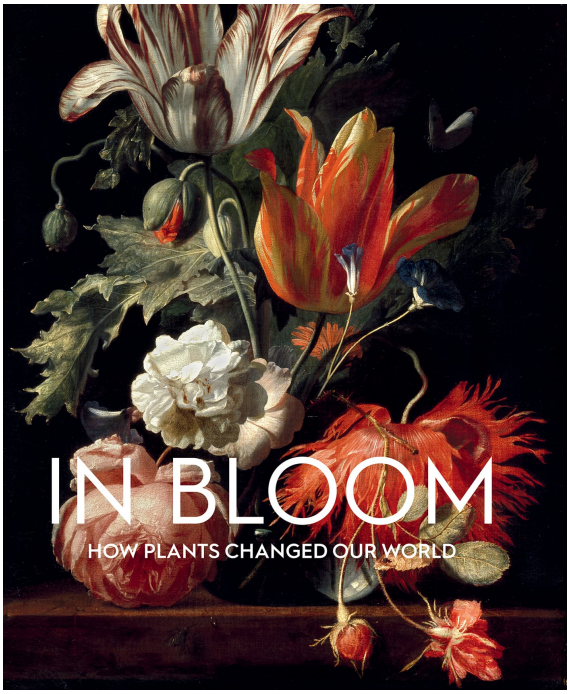
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# In Bloom

## How Plants Changed Our World

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- Weaves together history, art and material culture
- Showcases Oxford's unique collections and expertise
- Richly illustrated
- Features works rarely explored in the public domain and usually only discussed in specialist literature
- Stretches over the present time by integrating a selection of contemporary works of art that respond to the issues raised by the historic evidence
- Accompanies a major exhibition to be held at the Ashmolean from March to the end of August 2026

Flowers and plants are a staple of British life. Nearly 40% of our population considers themselves to be gardeners, making this and associated activities a national pursuit. And yet, while we hold endless discussions over how to seed, grow, and disseminate our cherished plants, we still known relatively little about how they were collected, exchanged, circulated, identified, and modified, and how much art has shaped our understanding and appreciation of them. This publication, designed to accompany the homonymous exhibition at the Ashmolean Museum, explores some of these plant stories through highlights from Oxford's collections. Bringing together historical and scientific expertise, art and material culture, traditional and contemporary artworks, this book ultimately reflects on the long-lasting impact of flora on our society – and of us on it.

**Francesca Leoni** has been curator of Islamic art at the Ashmolean Museum since 2011 (Yousef Jameel Curator, 2011–16). Prior to Oxford, she held curatorial, research and teaching posts at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (2008–11), Rice University (2008–10) and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (2007–8). Her interests include book arts; cross-cultural exchanges between the Islamic world, Europe and Asia; the history and circulation of technologies; occultism and divination; and modern and contemporary art from the Middle East**Shailendra Bhandare** is Assistant Keeper, South Asian and Far-eastern Numismatics and Paper Money Collections, a Fellow of St Cross College and a member of Faculty of Oriental Studies. He started his career as a Numismatist with a visiting fellowship at the Fitzwilliam Museum, University of Cambridge. He was then appointed as a post-doctoral fellow of the Society for South Asian Studies, and worked as a curator in the British Museum on the coins of Later Mughals and the Indian Princely States. He was appointed as curator of coins in the Ashmolean Museum in 2002**Professor Stephen Harris** is an expert on the use of molecular markers in evolutionary and conservation biology, especially hybridization, polyploidy, the evolutionary consequences of human-mediated plant movement and conservation genetics. He is also interested in the problems of using herbarium specimens as a source of DNA for evolutionary studies, and the history of botany.









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