

LITTORAL





# LITTORAL

AADJE BRUCE

CHRIS DE ROSA

JULIE GOUGH

BEVERLEY SOUTHCOTT

TONI WARBURTON

JUDY WATSON

*8 April to 16 May 2010*

*Carnegie Gallery Hobart*

16 Argyle Street Hobart

T 03 6238 2100

*30 July to 12 September*

*Burnie Regional*

*Art Gallery*

Burnie Arts & Function Centre

Wilmot Street Burnie

T 03 6430 5875

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Vivonne Thwaites

Writer

Jean Fornasiero

## Acknowledgements

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The Hobart City Council is delighted to include *Littoral* as part of the Carnegie Gallery exhibition program for 2010.

The Carnegie Gallery, owned and operated by the Hobart City Council, presents a public program of exhibitions which showcases contemporary art, craft and design, celebrates cultural diversity, supports Tasmanian Aboriginal cultural practice and explores themes such as the City's natural, built and cultural heritage.

The Carnegie Gallery provides artists and curators the opportunity to exhibit in a professionally supported and well-promoted exhibition program. The Carnegie Gallery actively engages the arts sector, interest groups and the general public through the provision of excellent, innovative and socially relevant exhibitions which profile Tasmanian contemporary artists within a national context.

In addition the Carnegie Gallery supports national and international touring exhibitions and provides an opportunity and venue for contemporary exhibitions that would otherwise not be available to the Hobart community.

*Littoral* is particularly relevant to the Carnegie Gallery as it draws in the Maritime Museum and the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery collections to assist in playing out the themes in the exhibition. The gallery faces Hobart's harbour: the deep waters reflect the sky and buildings surrounding this site, which evokes our history and gives resonance to the works within the gallery. We know that in the early 1800s the French rested in Adventure Bay not far south of Hobart and interactions between indigenous groups and the French are recorded at this site, in Baudin's diary. It is also relevant that the oceans off the east coast of Tasmania are of interest internationally to marine scientists.

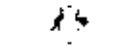
I would personally like to extend my congratulations to the curator and all the artists involved with the exhibition, *Littoral*.

### Alderman Rob Valentine

Lord Mayor of Hobart



The Carnegie Gallery  
is a cultural initiative  
of Hobart City Council  
[www.hobartcity.com.au](http://www.hobartcity.com.au)



This project has been assisted by the Australian Government  
through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body.



## Curator

### Vivonne Thwaites

Vivonne Thwaites is an independent curator of contemporary art projects that use an interdisciplinary approach to make connections with history, culture and ecology. In 2006 she was awarded the University of Sydney Power Studio at Cité Internationale des Arts in Paris.

Selected projects:

2010 Carnegie Gallery, Hobart, *Littoral*.

2006 Adelaide Bank Festival of Arts, *Writing a painting*,

South Australian School of Art Gallery, University of South Australia.

2006 Tamworth Fibre Textile Biennial, *in the world*, toured nationally.

2004 Adelaide Bank Festival of Arts, *Holy Holy Holy*, Flinders University Art Museum, toured nationally.

2001–2002 Centenary of Federation, *Home is where the heart is*, Burra Regional Gallery; Art Museum, University of South Australia and toured South Australia and Victoria.

2000 Telstra Adelaide Festival, Adelaide Festival Centre, *Karra/Karawimabarri*.

1998 Adelaide Festival Centre, *Three Views of Kaurna Territory Now*.

1997 Adelaide Festival Centre, *Mapping the comfort zone: The dream and the real*.

She established artroom5 in 2008 to showcase the work of younger and innovative artists in Adelaide.

## Writer

### Jean Fornasiero

Jean Fornasiero is Associate Professor of French Studies at the University of Adelaide. Her research is predominantly in nineteenth-century French history and literature, particularly the Napoleonic and Romantic periods. She is one of the chief investigators in an Australian Research Council funded project to review the historiography of the Baudin expedition and to publish its archives and iconography online, on *The Baudin Legacy* website. She has published on several aspects of the Baudin expedition, from its hydrographical achievements to its place in the history of science, from its anthropological results to the artwork of Charles-Alexandre Lesueur and Nicolas Petit. Her interest in Lesueur stems not only from his role as a scientific illustrator, but also from his participation in a utopian community in New Harmony, Indiana.

Publications include :

*Encountering Terra Australis: The Australian Voyages of Nicolas Baudin and Matthew Flinders, 1800–1803* (co-authors: Peter Monteath & John West-Sooby), Kent Town, Wakefield Press, 2004. Frank Broeze Maritime History Prize, 2005; second edition, 2009.

*The Baudin Expedition 1800–1804. Texts, Contexts and Subtexts* (co-editors: Margaret Sankey & Peter Cowley), special number of *Australian Journal of French Studies*, XLI, 2, 2004.

She is preparing a critical edition of François Péron's *Memoir on the English Settlements in New Holland* with John West-Sooby.

# DISCOVERING THE ART OF LESUEUR

Vivonne Thwaites

I arrived in Paris in July 2006 to take up a residency in the University of Sydney's studio at the Cité Internationale des Arts in the centre of Paris.

My focus was the work of Charles-Alexandre Lesueur, who was employed with Nicolas-Martin Petit as an artist on the Baudin voyage to Australia, 1800-1804.



*"All the images and objects in this museum were once contemporary.*

*They had an emotional immediacy and meaning...*

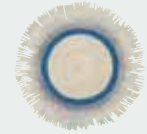
In the eighteenth century, France was at the forefront of scientific advances and the push to explore and understand the natural world. Through government support and private benefaction, expeditions were commissioned to explore uncharted realms and to collect, document and return to France as much empirical data as possible. In the early nineteenth century, the voyage of Nicolas Baudin, on the corvettes *Géographe* and *Naturaliste*, was one of the last of the great French voyages of exploration and discovery.

Amongst all the material that returned to France after the voyage were numerous small watercolours on paper made by Charles-Alexandre Lesueur. Many of these were made at the request of his commandant, Nicolas Baudin, who had personally recruited Lesueur and Petit to illustrate the fair copy of his journal, also known as his *Journal historique*. When Bory de Saint-Vincent, the zoologist on the *Naturaliste*, saw the work of the two young artists for the first time while visiting the *Géographe* at Ile de France, he commented:

I looked with admiration through the journal of the commandant. It was an immense bound volume, lying open upon a table in his apartment [...]. This journal contained a multitude of images of molluscs, fishes and other objects of natural history, painted with a perfection and truth to which nothing can compare [...]. I was surprised and touched on examining these masterpieces, and I hastened to find out the name of the author of these fine works, in order to tell him of the satisfaction they gave me.



Charles-Alexandre Lesueur (artist),  
Frères Lambert (engraver)  
Frontispiece, *Atlas historique, Voyage  
de découvertes aux Terres australes*,  
part 1, 1st edition, 1807  
Engraving on paper  
31.0 x 23.5 cm (plate)  
© State Library of Victoria



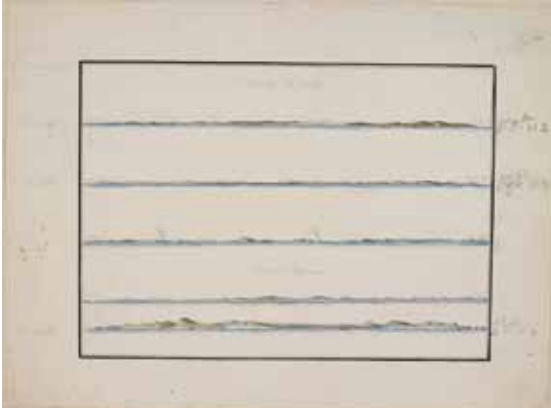
*Why do we have to think of the British Museum as ancient and the Tate Modern as new?*

*I'm interested in subverting our expectations of time."<sup>1</sup>*

I was introduced to a young man of very modest appearance, whose noble zeal had led him to embark as an apprentice helmsman, when he was worthy of participating in a scientific expedition in a capacity more useful to the progress of the arts.<sup>2</sup> In contrast to the atlas of the official account of the expedition, initially published in 1807,<sup>3</sup> and containing colour plates worked up from original paintings after the return of the expedition, it is Baudin's *Journal historique*, with its tiny watercolours,<sup>4</sup> and his sea-log or *Journal de mer*, in which the commandant provided his acute and often emotional descriptions of daily life on board ship<sup>5</sup> that speak most directly of the actual experience of the voyage. Specimens collected would lose colour and form, but the watercolours have retained their brightness and wonder, the moment of discovery.

Unable to deal with the trying conditions, the more experienced artists officially appointed to the voyage—Louis Lebrun and Jacques Milbert on the *Géographe*, and Michel Garnier on the *Naturaliste*—left the voyage at Ile de France in 1801. It was at this point that Lesueur and Petit effectively replaced them. Baudin noted in a letter to Antoine-Laurent de Jussieu, the Director of the Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle in Paris, that they were “more deserving of national recognition than all the well-known artists who were chosen and who were so over-praised”.<sup>6</sup>

- 1 James Putnam, quoted by Rachel Campbell-Johnston, “Broke and dowdy, the British Museum is fighting to make itself as relevant as Tate Modern”, *The Times*, 7 August, 2002.
- 2 J.B.M.G. Bory de Saint-Vincent, *Voyage dans les quatre principales îles des mers d'Afrique fait par ordre du gouvernement pendant les années neuf et dix de la République (1801 et 1802)*, Paris, F. Buisson, 1804, vol.1, pp. 161–162. Translation by Jean Fornasiero.
- 3 There were several versions of the atlas published, but the first appeared in 1807, along with the narrative of the expedition by François Péron. The details of these two volumes are as follows:  
François Péron, *Voyage de découvertes aux Terres australes exécuté par ordre de Sa Majesté l'Empereur et Roi, sur les corvettes le Géographe, le Naturaliste, et la goélette le Casuarina, pendant les années 1800, 1801, 1802, 1803, et 1804*, vol. 1: *Historique*, Paris, Imprimerie impériale, 1807; Charles-Alexandre Lesueur et Nicolas-Martin Petit, *Atlas*, 1ère partie, Paris, Imprimerie impériale, 1807.
- 4 Baudin's fair copy, which was only partly completed, is to be found in the Archives Nationales de France, Série Marine, 5JJ 35, 40 B-D. It was published in French by Jacqueline Bonnemains as *Mon voyage aux Terres australes. Journal personnel du commandant Baudin*, Paris, Imprimerie Nationale, 2000.
- 5 Baudin's sea-log, which is held in the Archives Nationales de France, Série Marine 5JJ 36-39, 40A, has been translated into English by Christine Cornell as *The Journal of Post-Captain Nicolas Baudin*, Adelaide, Libraries Board of South Australia, 1974 (re-issued 2004).
- 6 Quoted in Jean Fornasiero, Peter Monteath, John West-Sooby, *Encountering Terra Australis: The Australian Voyages of Nicolas Baudin and Matthew Flinders (1800–1804)*, Kent Town, Wakefield Press, 2004, p. 311.



Charles-Alexandre Lesueur or  
Nicolas-Martin Petit  
16086: Profiles of Australian coasts:  
Three profiles of "Leeuwin Land" and two  
of "Edels Land". No. 1: Cape Freycinet;  
No. 2: Geographe Bay;  
No. 5: Rottneest Island.  
Watercolour, ink and pencil  
21 x 28.5 cm  
© Collection Lesueur, Muséum d'Histoire  
Naturelle, Le Havre

Fornasiero, Monteath and West-Sooby have remarked that we can be grateful that academic convention did not weigh too heavily on Lesueur and Petit, allowing a window of opportunity for the completion of the new artworks that are the subject of this exhibition. These works are not as heavily affected by academic training and painterly tradition as they may otherwise have been. Milbert, in contrast, "did eventually assist with the final engravings for the atlas, suggesting changes to the Aboriginal portraits that would bring their proportions into line with academic convention."<sup>7</sup>

Throughout July I walked each day, over the Ile St. Louis, past the Université, down Rue Jussieu to Rue Cuvier, and into the Jardin des Plantes and the Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle. The places and street names were redolent of the Baudin voyage,<sup>8</sup> which left Le Havre on 19 October 1800 and navigated its way around Australia before the *Géographe* returned to Le Havre in 1804 with "countless cases of minerals, dried plants, shells, fishes, preserved reptiles and zoophytes, stuffed or dissected birds and quadrupeds, seventy large boxes filled with living plants [...], six hundred types of seed in several thousand packets and [...] one hundred or so live animals and birds".<sup>9</sup>

The expedition secured the largest and most valuable natural history collection of its time—over 200,000 objects and 1,500 drawings or paintings, by Lesueur. There is no estimate of the number of Petit's works but Frank Horner noted that 154 were recovered for the Le Havre Museum. The expedition charted nearly two-thirds of the Australian coastline, some 600 kilometres of it for the first time, bestowing French names to hundreds of locations around the Australian coast. The cartographer Louis Freycinet published the first complete map of the Australian continent, on which a large section of the southern coast was labelled "Terre Napoléon". It is one of the most beautiful of Australian maps. Other maps from the voyage, such as a map of the east coast of Tasmania, appear in the accompanying exhibition in the Maritime Museum of Tasmania, courtesy of the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery.

On their return to Paris in 1804 Lesueur and François Péron, who at 25 had been appointed to the voyage as assistant zoologist, worked from an apartment near the Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris, "cataloguing specimens, and acclimatising both animals and plants to their new environments".<sup>10</sup> More than 40,000 specimens had previously been prepared while in Sydney in 1802, for return to France in the *Naturaliste*.

Throughout July 2006 I sat at a large desk in the library at the Jardin des Plantes. Assisted by a librarian I combed through numerous folders of small gem-like paintings by Lesueur that have survived for over 200 years—with little conservation and many never exhibited or reproduced. The works were foxed in many places but the underlying sketch and gradual layering of paint were still evident. The paint on the paper was vivid and bright.

These surprising little drawings and paintings show Lesueur's fellow voyagers capturing jellyfish from small boats or sitting sketching in their sailors' smocks. In another drawing the artist, perhaps dreaming of home, has overlaid a European cityscape with jellyfish imagery. The majority of the works were of undersea life—bright and curious creatures, asymmetrical, many never before seen or painted.

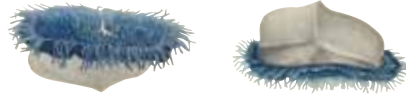
After my morning visits to the Jardin des Plantes, I spent my afternoons at the Centre Georges Pompidou viewing the masterpieces of early modernism, from cubism to surrealism. The forms in Lesueur's water-colours were so curious and my visits to the Pompidou so frequent that I began to see connections between some of these works and the surrealist art permanently on exhibition. The surrealists too were fascinated by science and the natural world. To quote André Breton writing about objects photographed by Man Ray:

Poets meet with scientists within these "force fields" created in the imagination by bringing two different images together.

This faculty of bringing two images close together allows them to raise themselves above the consideration of the object's evident life, which generally constitutes a barrier.<sup>11</sup>

Although made in a different time and place, Lesueur's works seemed curiously sympathetic to the aims of the surrealists. In Lesueur's case the conditions in which he was painting and the forms he chose to paint led to the development of a similarly unique expression. Although Lesueur was not seeking to shake traditions, the urgency to capture the colour and shapes in the marine environment, and the sheer strangeness of the creatures, allowed him to use his full palette and drawing skills and to celebrate, with loosely brushed paint on paper, the extraordinary diversity he encountered. Bernard Smith suggests that immersion in the natural world on the voyage, such as that experienced by Lesueur and Petit, "could influence an artist's approach to painting [...] away from neo-classical and the picturesque".<sup>12</sup>

Surrealism aimed to express the unconscious, and there was a sense that the artworks made at the time were like artefacts brought back from some journey into other imaginary realms. Dreams captured within a realistic though irrational style were typical of this movement, as were dreamlike fantasies. Spontaneous techniques were also employed—"free association" was used to avoid conscious control. Although exact science was referred to, scientific coherence was shunned. Many years earlier the artists on the Baudin voyage were painting in trying conditions, far from home and the scrutiny or influence of the conventions of the time.



<sup>7</sup> Fornasiero, Monteath, West-Sooby, *Encountering Terra Australis*, p. 311.

<sup>8</sup> Antoine-Laurent de Jussieu (1793–1826) was Professor of Botany, and Director of the Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle of Paris. He was Baudin's chief supporter within the scientific establishment. Georges Cuvier had founded the science of comparative anatomy, and zoologists trained by him joined the Baudin expedition. In 1806 he wrote the Institute's report on the collections the voyage brought back from New Holland.

<sup>9</sup> In quoting from the text of the official account of the *Voyage de découvertes aux Terres australes*, we have used the English translation of the second edition of 1824 by Christine Cornell, published in four volumes between 2003 and 2007. For the source of this quotation, see Anthony J. Brown, "Introduction", François Péron, *Voyage of Discovery to the Southern Lands*, trans. Cornell, vol. 1, Adelaide, Friends of the State Library of South Australia, 2006, pp. xxiii–xxiv.

<sup>10</sup> Anthony J. Brown, "Introduction", François Péron, *Voyage of Discovery*, trans. Cornell, vol. 1, 2006, p. xxiv.

<sup>11</sup> André Breton, "Crise de l'objet", *Cahiers d'art*, no. 1–2, 1936, p. 26, as translated and quoted by E. de l'Écotais in "When Objects Dream", in J. Annear and E. de l'Écotais (eds), *Man Ray*, Sydney, Art Gallery of New South Wales, c. 2003, p. 18.

<sup>12</sup> Bernard Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*, London, Harper and Row, 1984, p. 199.

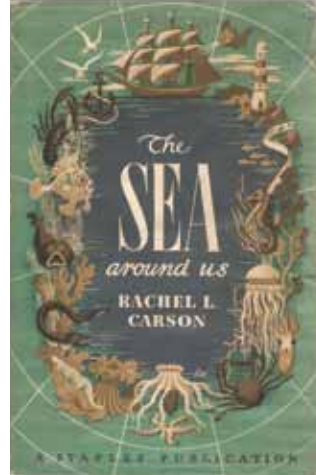


Man Ray  
No title (*Hands and Sphere*), 1922  
Gelatin silver photograph  
(called rayograph by the artist)  
23.0 x 17.4 cm  
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra



Lesueur was tightly bound to his scientific task, but with subjects such as the jellyfish and corals, he was dealing with strangely amorphous and asymmetrical creatures. Painting these species, mostly unclassified, must have demanded new techniques and a freer flow in paint and form. Almost certainly the creatures dredged up from the depths of the ocean—as opposed to terrestrial plants and animals—offered Lesueur the opportunity to use the brightest colours and the most open forms. From a painterly perspective, the works are at the very edge of science and art—the artist’s aim was to record and document, but there is clearly enjoyment in the colours and shapes. It is in the paintings and sketches of undersea creatures that the artist most freely expresses himself.

It is arguable that the ocean, which was still largely unknown, occupied the same symbolic space for Enlightenment Europe as does outer space for twenty-first-century humankind. It was an almost impenetrable space on to which one could project one’s deepest fears and desires. Even as late as 1870 Jules Verne’s classic novel *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* caused a sensation in France.



Katherine L. Howe  
Cover drawing, Rachel Carson,  
*The Sea Around Us*, London,  
Staples Press Limited, 1951

Two thousand years earlier, it was the unknowability of the ocean that led many cultures to develop mythologies about it that to our eyes look completely fanciful:

To the ancient Greeks the ocean was an endless stream that flowed forever around the border of the world, ceaselessly turning upon itself like a wheel, the end of earth, the beginning of heaven [...]. If a person were to venture far out upon it—were such a course thinkable—he would pass through gathering darkness and obscuring fog and would come at last to a dreadful and chaotic blending of sea and sky, a place where whirlpools and yawning abysses waited to draw the traveller down into a dark world from which there was no return.<sup>13</sup>

The wonder of the sea was fully conveyed in Péron’s *Voyage de découvertes aux Terres australes*, which has become one of the most enduring records of Baudin’s voyage. In the examples below, Péron had probably seen the opalescent squid, which has the ability to change colours and is able to communicate feelings with others of its kind; different colours and patterns on its surface represent fear or aggression or show when it is time to mate. Glowing in the moonlight, the firefly squid produces sparkling blue light when spawning near the surface.

Here, the entire surface of the ocean sparkles and shines like some silver material electrified in the darkness; there, the waves spread out in immense sheets of flowing sulphur and bitumen; elsewhere, one would think the ocean a limitless sea of milk.<sup>14</sup>

Several sailors have observed glowing parallelograms, pirouetting cones of light, dazzling festoons and luminous serpents. In some region of the seas, sparkling jets of fire have been seen shooting across the surface of the water; elsewhere, people have seen what looks like clouds of light and phosphorus moving over the waves in the gloom.<sup>15</sup>

Similarly the small jewel-like watercolours by Lesueur bring the viewer right on to the boat and into the wonder of what was being captured during the voyage. A large portion of the works produced by Lesueur were painted immediately a catch was hauled up from the oceans. The voyage resulted in a multitude of sketches and paintings of new species, of indigenous people, their implements and way of life. Instructions given to Péron at the start of the voyage sought a more systematic and measurable outcome, but it was fortuitous that Lesueur and Petit remained open to what they encountered despite the push for empirical data.

Frank Horner notes:

What was needed was artists who would record exactly what they saw, whether landscapes, plants, animals or human beings, without preconceptions about composition or ideals of beauty.

Two unknown artists appointed by Baudin [...] probably made the transition to a more scientific type of illustration easier for French works of discovery than it would otherwise have been.<sup>16</sup>

Back in Paris, Lesueur's initial sketches of jellyfish were transferred to plate for the publication of the atlases that accompanied the first volume of Péron's narrative, the first atlas in 1807 and the second enlarged version in 1811. The illustration entitled "Molluscs and Zoophytes", which appeared in the 1811 atlas and which is a hand-coloured engraving by Lambert made from watercolours by Charles-Alexandre Lesueur, gives us a good insight into the process of transformation that has occurred.<sup>17</sup> The central form and text are surrounded by a decorative border of smaller jellyfish—simplified and heraldic—to celebrate French achievement. But the small informal original watercolours I viewed that could possibly have been made on deck, are much more complex. They are paintings of living things, fresh and alive with colour. The hand of the artist is evident in the brushwork; under-washes were completed then minute detail was brought in over the top. Clearly many of the works were made in situ with the intention of finishing them later or they were "painted notes", never meant for publication but saving information about the minute detail of specimens hauled on deck.<sup>18</sup>

While in Paris I also explored the navy archives of the *Service historique de la défense* or SHD, at the Château de Vincennes, which is where the correspondence relating to the preparation and planning of Baudin's voyage is held. I looked through boxes of letters written in ink on heavy paper, lists of items to be taken on board: paint, paper, inks, books, maps and all manner of storage devices. Lists of art supplies indicate the seriousness of the artistic endeavour of the voyage, as we can see from this short extract relating to coloured paints:

Four boxes of assorted colours, 200 red pencils, 200 black pencils, 12 assorted ebony rulers, four wooden set squares, 12 pencil holders, two ivory palettes and materials, four boxes of coloured paint, ultramarine, two boxes of carmine, two boxes of bladder green, two boxes of gutta gum, four dozen brushes for miniatures, two dozen brushes for washes, an assortment of prepared oil colours in pots or bladders, two camerae obscurae.<sup>19</sup>



Charles-Alexandre Lesueur (artist),  
Frères Lambert (engraver)  
Molluscs and Zoophytes, *Atlas historique,  
Voyage de découvertes aux Terres australes*,  
part 1, 1st edition, 1807, pl. xxix  
Hand-coloured engraving  
© State Library of Victoria

<sup>13</sup> Rachel Carson, *The Sea Around Us*, London, Staples Press Limited, 1951, p. 202.

<sup>14</sup> François Péron, *Voyage of Discovery*, trans. Cornell, vol. 1, 2006, p. 33.

<sup>15</sup> François Péron, *Voyage of Discovery*, trans. Cornell, vol. 1, 2006, p. 34.

<sup>16</sup> Frank Horner, *The French Reconnaissance: Baudin in Australia 1801–1803*, Carlton, Melbourne University Press, 1987, p. 73.

<sup>17</sup> *Atlas*, 1811, p. xxix.

<sup>18</sup> In relation to artworks that were considered working sketches only: "The activities taking place behind the scenes in museums have been as important as the modes of display in public areas. There is the interesting contrast between revealing and concealing [...], choosing to exhibit one object while keeping others in reserve storage." James Putnam, *Art and Artefact, the Museum as Medium*, London, Thames and Hudson, 2001, p. 16.

<sup>19</sup> We are most grateful to Michel Jangoux for so generously giving us access to this document, which is entitled, "Etat général des objets nécessaires à l'armement, équipement et ravitaillement des deux corvettes le *Géographe* et le *Naturaliste*, destinées au voyage dont le commandement est confié au capitaine Baudin", and which is to be found in the navy archives at the SHD, Vincennes, BB4-997 (dossier 3). Translation by Jean Fornasiero.



William Webb Ellis  
*View of Adventure Bay, Van Dieman's  
 Land, New Holland, 1777*  
 Watercolour  
 © National Maritime Museum,  
 Greenwich, London



Later I travelled by train to Le Havre to the Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle, where I visited its annexe at the Fort de Tourneville, home of the Lesueur Collection. There I viewed some of the watercolours on vellum completed on return to France. A page of sheet music, transcribed by Lesueur and the astronomer Pierre-François Bernier, from the chants of Aboriginal people they met in 1802, is held in this archive, adding further detail to the types of encounters with indigenous people that took place during the voyage.<sup>20</sup> Given the complexities involved in communicating across the barriers of language and culture, it was notable that an “Aboriginal chant” was recorded. Lesueur and Petit’s paintings of indigenous people and their material culture made on the Baudin voyage are to this day ground-breaking in their approach to representing a rich and unknown culture. An accompanying essay elaborates on the complexities of encounters, in particular through sound, and in relation to Howard Morphy’s comment that it is “all too possible to slip from critical analysis into easy interpretation” when attempting to describe experiences of contact such as those of Lesueur, Petit and Bernier.<sup>21</sup>

I left Paris at the end of August. My two months’ work in the archives had been quite astonishing. The works I had seen were old and fragile, after the extraordinarily difficult voyages to which many of them had been subjected, and it seemed a miracle that they had survived. But they were also fresh and had much to say. Returning home to Adelaide, I continued to read intensively on the Baudin voyage and Lesueur, deepening my understanding of the cultural and intellectual climate that produced the voyage, and the level of political intrigue surrounding Baudin that led to the confusing place he holds in the history of exploration and scientific discovery.

On my return to Australia I was also thrown back into the contemporary world, and the politics of my local beachside suburb of Henley Beach. It seemed like a very different ocean from the one experienced by Lesueur, Baudin, and their companions, in these same waters over 200 years ago. The ocean that was for the French voyagers a new world is now a severely compromised environment which bears the most visible traces of the damage humankind is wreaking on the planet. Liquid and solid pollution, over-fishing, acidification and changing climate patterns reflect the results of the Enlightenment’s pursuit of knowledge coupled with unchecked economic progress.

What can the tiny and magical works of Lesueur mean to artists today or to people in general? Why was this material never published? Even today it is the more complete works that are published or taken to plate.<sup>22</sup> What does this say about our attitude to first-hand experience of the natural world? Do we prefer it to be mediated? Is it that the colour, sheer brilliance and uniqueness of these forms were too shocking, too deeply different, to be able to be absorbed by a public? The astonishingly felt first watercolours were seen as “painted notes” and were never meant for publication. The more mediated images were accepted for publication after various hands had worked over them and altered them irrevocably. Do we prefer to construct a sense of place, rather than directly experience it?

The contemporary artists in this project have taken inspiration from these unique works—the receptivity and inventiveness that Lesueur was able to bring to his work when faced with the creatures of the Southern Ocean, but also the rare balance in his work of scientific enquiry and aesthetic openness. This is the fixed point around which the new works are conceptualised and constructed.

They aim to rekindle the sense of wonder at the heart of the work Lesueur accomplished on his voyage, and which is an essential nutrient for the human soul. Like Lesueur their focus is on the ocean, but a different ocean, a place whose mythic or mystical dimension has been largely usurped by the conflicting demands that humanity places upon it as a source of food and mineral supplies, a waste dump, a contested space of national sovereignty and much more.

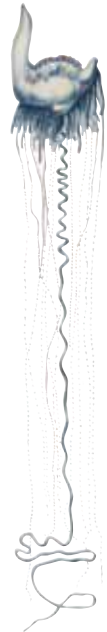
Music, art, history, science, film—artists today can make use of a grab-bag of disciplines and forms, materials and insights to connect with the world and express their ideas. In selecting the contemporary artists for *Littoral*, I have chosen people whose art shows an openness to, and interest in, the natural world, an engagement with contemporary issues and an ability in their particular media to make works that are transformative and revelatory. In briefing the artists, I directed them to texts by Baudin and Péron and artworks by Lesueur that described the astonishment and awe created by their engagement with the ocean and its creatures so long ago.

The aim of Toni Warburton, Beverley Southcott, Chris De Rosa, Judy Watson, Julie Gough and Aadjie Bruce is to see the ocean with fresh eyes. While this unavoidably involves responding to the threats that face the marine environment, it also allows them to re-establish a sense of wonder for the natural world that has largely been lost in our everyday lives. For contained in the very world around us so close at hand are intricacies so varied that we can only be astonished at their beauty, complexities and logic.

<sup>20</sup> There are several examples of musical transcriptions of songs and chants from the indigenous peoples of Timor, Australia and Tasmania held in the Lesueur Collection in Le Havre. Note particularly the page of sheet music by Lesueur, numbered 16057R and entitled “Musical Airs noted in various places by Pierre-François Bernier and Charles-Alexandre Lesueur”.

<sup>21</sup> Howard Morphy, “Encountering Aborigines”, in S. Thomas (ed.), *The Encounter 1802, Art of the Flinders and Baudin Voyages*, Adelaide, Art Gallery of South Australia, 2002, p. 154.

<sup>22</sup> It is still the vellums and the black and white etchings that are published most frequently.

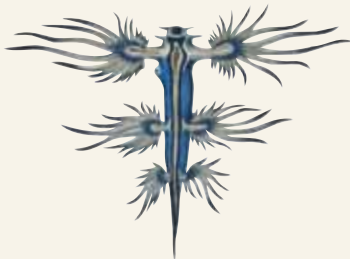


# CHARLES-ALEXANDRE LESUEUR: AN ART OF THE LITTORAL

Jean Fornasiero

*"The sea-shore is a sort of neutral ground, a most  
advantageous point from which to contemplate this world."*

*Henry David Thoreau, Cape Cod, 1865<sup>1</sup>*



As an inhabitant of the littoral, born in Le Havre of a sea-faring and merchant family, Charles-Alexandre Lesueur must always have known that he would live his life by and from the sea. The harbour and shorelines of Le Havre were a constant source of attraction for both the painter and naturalist that he would become; the littoral was alive with human industry and activity; the thriving port provided a link between the world and the fluvial transport systems of Europe; the waves cast up colourful debris and myriads of marine animals; the shoreline, dominated by the imposing cliffs of the Cape of La Hève, layered with fossils, invited contemplation on the origins of life. That this picturesque spot, where men plied their trades against the backdrop of the sea, was to shape his imagination and his thoughts is unquestionable.<sup>2</sup> At various intervals in a life spent wandering the globe, Lesueur would return to this stretch of the Normandy coast, devoting his energies to capturing on paper the sights that unfolded as he took his customary walks on the shore, following an itinerary to which he was irresistibly drawn and that had become for him as much a “necessity” as a pleasure.<sup>3</sup> However, before Lesueur came back to “contemplate the world” from his own native shores, he had embarked on many a voyage, all of which had given him the eye to take in the wonders of the littoral and the sure hand to reproduce them.

But what had led Lesueur from his Normandy childhood to an art that represented his passion for the sea, its shores and its variety of forms, colours and movements? The story of his adventures on other oceans and shores begins in 1800, when Lesueur was a young man of 22, about to embark upon a grand voyage of discovery to the southern hemisphere led by Captain Nicolas Baudin.<sup>4</sup> Lesueur was no doubt in sympathy with the aspirations of many of his compatriots, including his brothers, who had served at sea.

However, the artistic talents of young Charles-Alexandre meant that he was not subjected to the harsh lot of the sailor. He was intended from the outset to keep the artistic record of all that the scientists on the voyage required; the particular apprenticeship that he served was in the various forms of artistic representation that his duties entailed, from coastal profiles and landscapes to portraits of people and specimens. His correspondence with his father gives clear evidence that Lesueur's status as a member of the ship's crew was purely nominal and that Baudin had personally selected him to work as an artist, along with Nicolas-Martin Petit. Hence, in a letter sent to his father in Paris before his departure, Lesueur indicated that he urgently needed to receive his art supplies before the voyage departed. Lesueur was aware that his father was not completely happy about his plans to embark on the expedition, since he had not responded to his previous requests for help in retrieving the effects he so desperately needed:

You have said nothing to me about my imminent departure [...] that I informed you about in my most recent letters concerning Captain Baudin's expedition, and the different objects I asked you for, that is my box of coloured paint, pencils etc., in short everything in my trunk which is at Madame Lepetit's, so that you could have them sent to me here.<sup>5</sup>

A few days later, when making yet another request for his art supplies, Lesueur went into great detail about how he would be treated on board, not as a crew member, but as an artist and as a protégé of the commandant and his secretary:

I have embarked, dear father, which will not make you any happier, but since it is the Captain who is my employer he has promised me that he will take care of me. Mr Villain who is his secretary will not neglect me. I and some other young men both from here and from Paris will have their own table and I shall not be obliged to serve on the ship. I would have to be most unfortunate not to be able to find my way into Captain Baudin's good graces, as he is a most decent man and I have had the pleasure of seeing him several times in his cabin. Let me know whether you will have someone send me the various things I asked you for. A young artist friend of mine who is a student of David's and who has embarked with me will perhaps go to Paris, but since this is not certain, if you had a chance to have them sent to me in the meantime, please take the opportunity to do so.<sup>6</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1993, p. 147.

<sup>2</sup> Evidence of this life-long fascination is readily found in the Collection Lesueur (CL), the collection of his drawings and documents held at the Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle, Le Havre (MHNH), for example, dossiers 32 and 36.

<sup>3</sup> Charles-Alexandre Lesueur, Manuscript notes on Cap de la Hève, CL, MHNH, 32119-1.

<sup>4</sup> Jacqueline Bonnemains was the first to bring together the significant details of Lesueur's life, in a series of articles of which a recent version is the following: "The Artists of the Baudin Expedition: Charles-Alexandre Lesueur and Nicolas-Martin Petit" (translated by Jean Fornasiero and John West-Sooby), in Sarah Thomas (ed.), *The Encounter 1802. Art of the Flinders and Baudin Voyages*, Adelaide, Art Gallery of South Australia, 2002, pp. 126–138. For the most comprehensive overview of Lesueur's life and works, see Gabrielle Baglione and Cédric Crémère, *Charles-Alexandre Lesueur, peintre voyageur, un trésor oublié*, Paris, Edition de Conti, 2009.

<sup>5</sup> Letter from C.-A. Lesueur to his father, dated 2 August 1800, CL, MHNH, 63001; the English translations of this and all other French documents in this chapters are by Jean Fornasiero:

Vous ne m'avez rien dit sur mon prochain départ [...] dont je vous ai instruit par mes dernières au sujet de l'expédition du C<sup>ne</sup> Baudin & des différents objets que je vous ai demandés qui sont ma boîte de couleur, crayons, etc, enfin ce que renferme la malle qui est chez Madame Lepetit pour me les faire parvenir ici.

<sup>6</sup> Letter from C.-A. Lesueur to his father, dated 10 August 1800, CL, MHNH, 63003:

Je suis embarqué mon papa, cela ne vous fera pas plus de plaisir, mais comme c'est le C<sup>ne</sup> qui m'emploiera, lui m'a promis d'avoir soin de moi. Mr Villain qui est son secrétaire ne m'oubliera pas. Moi ainsi que d'autres jeunes gens tant d'ici que de Paris auront une table particulière et je ne serai point obligé au service du bâtiment. Il faut que je sois bien malheureux si je ne puis me mettre dans les bonnes grâces du Capitaine Baudin qui [est] un bien brave homme et que j'ai eu le plaisir de voir plusieurs fois à sa chambre. Dites-moi si vous me ferez passer les différents effets que je vous ai demandés. Un jeune artiste élève de David qui est embarqué avec moi et qui est mon camarade ira peut-être à Paris, mais comme il n'en est pas encore certain, si vous trouviez une occasion de me les faire passer de suite, profitez-en je vous prie.

Finally, a few months later, Lesueur confirmed in a letter he sent to his father on arrival at Ile de France that all the promises made to him had been honoured, since he was both well treated and able to devote himself almost exclusively to his art. As he affirmed:

My occupations are to draw natural history subjects, to go hunting and to help the commandant's secretary who has plenty to keep him busy. My main occupation is drawing. I eat with the officers, all in all I am very content with my lot.<sup>7</sup>

Of course, the senior artists designated by the Government had left the expedition at Ile de France, which enabled Lesueur and Petit openly to take over their official functions, but it is also clear that both young artists had been working on the illustrations for the commandant's journal from the start of the expedition, as several accounts of the voyage can confirm, including Baudin's journal and correspondence.

In fact, this practice of illustrating his journal as the expedition progressed was not new for the commandant, who had successfully employed it on a botanical voyage to the Caribbean a few years earlier. During this previous voyage on the *Belle Angélique*, from 1796 to 1798, Baudin was assisted in the preparation of his narrative by the artist Antonio Gonzales, who was particularly adept in botanical illustration. The 2009 edition of Baudin's Caribbean journal<sup>8</sup> gives a reliable, and visually sumptuous, impression of what Baudin's final narrative of the Australian voyage might have been, had the commandant survived to publish it. Instead, the journal of Baudin's voyage to the southern hemisphere, in which the two young men ably served their apprenticeship as scientific artists, was eventually dismantled and its images became dispersed throughout several archival collections. Along with many documents relating to Baudin's part in his own voyage, it remained dormant for many years in French archives, a victim of the poor reputation of the expedition and its commander.<sup>9</sup> It was only in 2000 that Jacqueline Bonnemains finally published the manuscript, complete with as many of the original illustrations as could still be identified, although not in the original place they may have occupied in the journal.<sup>10</sup>



This edition, and other studies of recent years which have based their findings on the original expedition records, have progressively revealed the extent to which Baudin was misrepresented in the official account of the voyage by François Péron and Louis Freycinet.<sup>12</sup> With Baudin's rehabilitation now in train, thanks in large part to the pioneering work of Frank Horner,<sup>13</sup> the way is now open to re-examine much of the detail regarding exactly what transpired on board.

In the case of the artwork, this troubled history explains why it was generally assumed that the presence of Lesueur and Petit on the expedition was a happy stroke of fate, rather than a judicious choice made at the outset by Nicolas Baudin. Viewed in this light, the decision on both Lesueur's and Petit's part to embark on the *Géographe* can be seen as a deliberate career choice; the scientific drawing required on the voyage would enable them to develop new technical skills as draughtsmen and to acquire status and experience as artists or illustrators. What initially had been their preferred genre or medium was less clear, for many of the tasks were shared between them, at least in the early part of the voyage. In Lesueur's case, we also have little or no information on his early training or apprenticeship and hence on what genre he may initially have favoured. As for Petit, his training with the celebrated Jacques-Louis David had clearly prepared him for the human subjects that became his major contribution to the artwork of the expedition: its portraits of indigenous Australians.<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, if Lesueur's training seems likely to remain a mystery, his specialisation in marine subjects seemed to have been acquired in equal parts by circumstances, by personal taste and technical aptitude.



The history of Lesueur's apprenticeship as a scientific artist can certainly be retraced, thanks to the records of the expedition, although this task is also complicated by the troubled historiography of the Baudin voyage. As the young artist grew proficient in sketching marine specimens, he came to work more and more frequently with zoologist François Péron, who, by expedition's end, had become Baudin's severest critic. The close working partnership that Lesueur established with Péron endured until the zoologist's death in 1810 and remained the most significant relationship in the artist's personal and professional life. It is inevitable, then, that this particularly fruitful partnership would come to overshadow other aspects of Lesueur's progression towards the mastery of his craft and even that Lesueur would eventually come to share his friend's hatred of Baudin, in spite of all of the grateful words he had written regarding the commandant's benevolence towards him.<sup>15</sup> However, if we retrace the story from its very beginning, using the manuscripts written at the time the events unfolded, other facts emerge that place Lesueur's apprenticeship, and Péron's, in a slightly different context.

Firstly, during the early part of the voyage Péron's own notebooks speak glowingly of Baudin and of his confidence in the commandant's leadership.<sup>16</sup> At this point, there is no hint in either Lesueur's writings or in Péron's of any disharmony within the scientific team on the *Géographe* under Baudin's command. Whether there are any systematic grumblings, these tend to concern the officers rather than the scientists.<sup>17</sup> It is important to remember that the vast majority of the defections of the scientific staff at Ile de France came from those on board the *Naturaliste*,<sup>18</sup> where Captain Hamelin's leadership seems to have been more problematic than first thought.<sup>19</sup> Secondly, it is often said that Baudin's principal difficulties sprang from the lack of choice he had over the appointments to his staff and scientific team and, while this is true in a great many respects, it is not so when it comes to the team of senior naturalists appointed to the *Géographe* and who were, in fact, friends and collaborators of the commander.

<sup>7</sup> Letter from C.-A. Lesueur to his father, dated 24 April 1801, CL, MHNH, 63016:

Mes occupations sont de dessiner les objets d'histoire naturelle, d'aller à la chasse et d'aider au secrétaire du commandant qui ne manque pas d'ouvrage. Ma principale occupation est le dessin. Je mange avec l'Etat Major, enfin je suis fort bien.

<sup>8</sup> Michel Jangoux (ed.), *Journal du voyage aux Antilles de la Belle Angélique (1796–1798)*, Paris, Presses Universitaires Paris-Sorbonne – Collection Imago Mundi, 2009.

<sup>9</sup> For an analysis of how this poor reputation was unfairly acquired, see Jean Fornasiero and John West-Sooby, "Doing it by the Book: Breaking the Reputation of Nicolas Baudin", in J. Fornasiero and C. Mrowa-Hopkins (eds), *Explorations and Encounters in French*, Adelaide, University of Adelaide Press, 2010, pp. 133–162.

<sup>10</sup> J. Bonnemains (ed.), *Mon voyage aux Terres australes: journal personnel du capitaine Baudin*, Paris, Imprimerie nationale, 2000.

<sup>11</sup> For a review of the historiography of the expedition, see Margaret Sankey, Peter Cowley and Jean Fornasiero, "The Baudin Expedition in Review: Old Quarrels and New Approaches", *Australian Journal of French Studies*, XLI, 2, 2004, pp. 4–14.

<sup>12</sup> F. Péron and L. Freycinet, *Voyage de découvertes aux Terres australes exécuté par ordre de Sa Majesté l'Empereur et Roi, sur les corvettes le Géographe, le Naturaliste; et la goélette le Casuarina, pendant les années 1800, 1801, 1802, 1803, et 1804*, Paris, Imprimerie impériale, 1807–1816.

<sup>13</sup> Frank Horner, *The French Reconnaissance: Baudin in Australia, 1801–1803*, Carlton, Melbourne University Press, 1987.

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, in this catalogue, the gentle portrait of a young Aboriginal man from New Holland, CL, MHNH, 20040.

<sup>15</sup> See above, note 7. For Lesueur's critical attitude towards Baudin in the latter stages of the voyage, see his Timor notebook, CL, MHNH, 17076-1.

<sup>16</sup> Michel Jangoux, in his edition of Péron's zoological notes relating to the first part of the voyage, has made this point. See "L'expédition du capitaine Baudin aux Terres australes: les observations zoologiques de François Péron pendant la première campagne (1801–1802)", *Annales du Muséum du Havre*, 73, mars 2005.

<sup>17</sup> For a discussion of the complaints of the officers and the deliberate attempts made to spread similar sentiments amongst the scientists by spying upon Baudin's correspondence, see Frank Horner, *The French Reconnaissance*, chapter 5.

<sup>18</sup> Jacqueline Goy has insisted on this fact in *Les Méduses de Péron et Lesueur: un autre regard sur l'expédition Baudin*, Paris, Editions du CTHS, 1995, p. 19.

<sup>19</sup> Geoffrey C. Ingleton is one of the few to have identified Hamelin's essential disloyalty to his commander. See *Matthew Flinders, Navigator and Chartmaker*, Guildford, Genesis Publications, 1986, p. 198. For a recent overview of the question, see Jean Fornasiero, "Jacques-Félix-Emmanuel Hamelin: Faithful Servant or Faithless Friend", in G. Baglione and C. Crémère (eds), *A la conquête des Terres australes*, in press?



The zoologists Stanislas Levillain and René Maugé and head gardener Anselme Riedlé had all accompanied Baudin on his voyage to the Caribbean, where they formed a close-knit team of naturalist-collectors. He was consequently delighted that they had consented to accompany him on his next voyage, on which their participation proved as effective and harmonious as before. It is in the day-to-day writings of two of these unassuming and candid members of Baudin's team that we find an effective counter-narrative to the revisionist account written up years after the events by Péron in the *Voyage aux Terres australes*, in which he consistently magnified the role he had played.<sup>20</sup> In terms of the collection of marine specimens that was undertaken during the crossing of the Atlantic and Indian Oceans, the two experienced collectors have left similar descriptions of both the teamwork that was involved and the chain of command.

Riedlé's journal is a particularly lively and detailed account of life on board the *Géographe*,<sup>21</sup> and, although he gives considerable information on his principal interests, namely the plants collected and the trees and salads grown and tended on board, he makes many a remark on the personalities of the various expeditioners and the politics of shipboard life, as well as the other scientific activities that take place. From his initial accounts of fishing for specimens, it is his friend Maugé who appears to be in charge and the fish caught in the special net that he constructed for that purpose are sent to Baudin, who would then decide which ones he would have drawn up for inclusion in his journal.<sup>22</sup> Lesueur and Petit thus remained at the captain's orders and Péron does not seem to have been involved in decisions about the scientific catch at this point in the voyage. When Riedlé does describe Péron it is in the role with which he officially commenced the journey: he duly attributes him his title as anatomist. However, it is Maugé's name that features heavily when Riedlé describes collecting and preserving marine animals. Maugé, he informs us on one occasion, had caught more than two dozen fish, the phosphorescent beauty of which had dazzled them all. He then notes the attempts made to preserve one specimen in various liquids.<sup>23</sup>

None of which is to say that Péron was not involved or not noting down his own observations, simply that Baudin's team was in charge of this activity, that Péron was able to benefit from their prior experience of such collecting and that Lesueur seems to have been quietly drawing what he was asked to draw, including some of his first exquisite depictions of marine life.

This impression of Lesueur's and Péron's initiation into their duties on board, as the ship effected its first long sea-crossings, is fully borne out by the writings of the other naturalist who was on the *Géographe* until it reached Ile de France, Stanislas Levillain. He would seem to be the same person who was designated by Lesueur as Baudin's secretary, Mr Villain, in which case it would appear that the zoologist may well have been a first mentor for Lesueur, who mentions the kind attention that "Villain" paid to him. Levillain certainly kept an illustrated zoological record that was similar to that of his commandant and the descriptions of the specimens in this record are clearly linked to Lesueur's paintings of some of these very animals.<sup>24</sup> From this notebook, not only is Lesueur's connection to Levillain's work apparent, but so too is the extent of the prior partnership of Levillain and Maugé in the collection of the species to which Péron's name has become associated. Péron has rightly acquired the reputation of pioneer in the classification of the medusae, but before he embarked upon his major work, Baudin's team had also shown the greatest of interest in these animals, their conservation and characteristics. While lacking the intellectual scope of Péron's work, Levillain's description of specimen 12B is most revealing of his enthusiasm and his sensitive nature:

Letter B designates another small medusa, ultramarine blue, of great interest because of its delicate and elegant form.

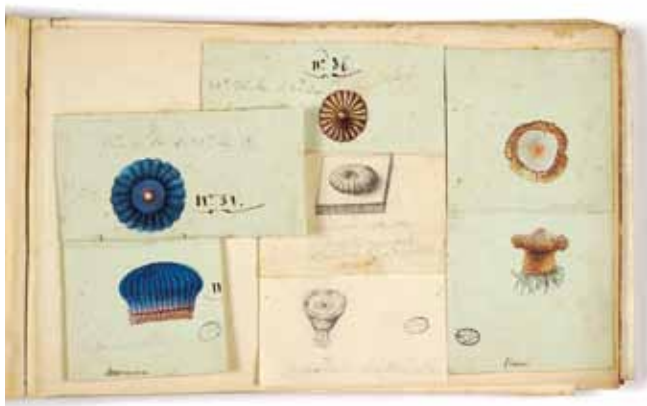
The movement of all its little tentacles is charming, and nothing is daintier or prettier to the eye than the different positions it takes up when you touch it.<sup>25</sup>

Levillain also recounts the experiments undertaken to study the phosphorescence of the medusae,<sup>26</sup> and the pains they went to in order to capture these fragile animals:

My colleague, the zoologist Citizen Maugé, and I had invented a kind of small fine-meshed pouch with a long wooden handle.

With this, we caught everything that swam alongside, and this enabled us frequently to present to Commandant Baudin some new individuals from the family of molluscs and other gelatinous animals, of which he immediately had drawings done.<sup>27</sup>

In passing, Levillain indicated Baudin's presence during the collecting and recording of the new species that were discovered, thus confirming the descriptions that Baudin himself gives of his participation in the activities of his zoological team.<sup>28</sup>



Charles-Alexandre Lesueur  
Ms 1735 n°. 034: Sea Anemone  
(Cnidaria Actinaria)  
*Bunodosoma capensis* (Lesson, 1830)  
Images cut from Baudin's journal:  
n°. 36: 4.5 x 10 cm, 7 x 7 cm and 7 x 7 cm;  
n°. 51: 5 x 10 cm and 6 x 6.5 cm  
© Bibliothèque Centrale, Muséum National  
d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris

<sup>20</sup> Of the three men, only Levillain and Riedlé have left journals and other notebooks that are held in the archival collections of the expedition, in the Museums of Paris and Le Havre, as well as the Archives Nationales in Paris. There is a journal in the Bibliothèque Centrale du Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris (MNHN) that purports to be Maugé's, but the contents belie that attribution, since it appears to be the journal of a naval officer rather than a naturalist.

<sup>21</sup> A. Riedlé, "Journal général du voyage de découvertes dans la mer du Sud depuis mon départ de Paris qui était le six vendémiaire an 9 de la République Française une et indivisible", MNHN, ms. 1688.

<sup>22</sup> A. Riedlé, "Journal", MNHN, 1688, p. 31.

<sup>23</sup> A. Riedlé, "Journal", MNHN, 1688, p. 42.

<sup>24</sup> S. Levillain, "Descriptions 7 à 13 bis", CL, MNHN, 14040. The name of Levillain does not feature on the cover as author of these zoological descriptions, but the handwriting and internal evidence clearly identify him as the author. An example of the link between Levillain's collection of marine animals and Lesueur's work is provided by Levillain's description of specimen 11 in this notebook, to which corresponds Lesueur's drawing 14027, CL, MNHN. This image and its link to Levillain's text can be seen on p. 51 of Baglione and Crémère, *Charles-Alexandre Lesueur, peintre voyageur*.

<sup>25</sup> Levillain, "Descriptions", CL, MNHN, 14040, n°. 12:

La lettre B désigne une autre petite méduse, bleu outremer, fort intéressante vu sa forme délicate, et élégante. Le mouvement de toutes ses petites tentacules est charmant, et rien n'est plus léger et joli à voir que les diverses positions qu'elle prend lorsque vous la touchez."

<sup>26</sup> Levillain, "Descriptions", CL, MNHN, 14040, n°. 12.

<sup>27</sup> Levillain, "Descriptions", CL, MNHN, 14040, n°. 11:

Mon frère de zoologie le Cen. Mauger et moi avions inventé une espèce de petite poche à maille fine emmanchée à un morceau de bois fort long. Par ce moyen nous pêchions tout ce qui passait le long du bord, et cela nous mettait à même de pouvoir souvent présenter au C<sup>dt</sup>. Baudin quelques individus de la famille des mollusques et autres gélatineux, que de suite il faisait dessiner.

Baudin also praises this invention, which he attributes to Maugé, and which he considers to have been extremely helpful in acquiring new knowledge on marine animals, in a letter to A.-L. de Jussieu, MNHN, ms. 2082, 3.

<sup>28</sup> Edward Duyker (*François Péron, Voyager and Naturalist: An Impetuous Life*, Carlton, Melbourne University Press, 2006), while acknowledging Levillain's and Maugé's role as collectors of marine specimens, seems to cast doubt upon Baudin's interest and participation in collecting and recording these specimens. This is puzzling, as there is no reason to treat the journals of the voyage, with their contemporaneous record of daily events, as unreliable evidence—unlike Péron's *Voyage*.

From such records, we can find no evidence to show that Lesueur worked closely with Péron in these early days or that their partnership in the description and representation of marine specimens was particularly advanced at that time. As young men of modest origins, they were no doubt still grateful for the opportunity that they had been given. Péron himself recognised the value of Maugé's tireless efforts,<sup>29</sup> even if he did not hesitate to claim some of Maugé's work as Lesueur's and even if he did not ever admit of any mentoring role for Maugé or Levillain in the first stages of the expedition.<sup>30</sup> As Baudin himself complained, many of the young scientists considered the Muséum employees such as Riedlé and Maugé to be far beneath them intellectually and socially.<sup>31</sup> However, while Maugé and Levillain were there to act as senior colleagues and to maintain a respect for order and hierarchy—before their respective deaths in December 1801 and February 1802—, the scientists were indeed functioning as a team to produce a centralised group record that was kept up to date by the commandant in the fair copy of his journal.<sup>32</sup> In this journal, which was open for all to see in the captain's cabin,<sup>33</sup> Baudin included the scientific reports he received from various individuals, reports which bore their name and recognised their contribution to the group record. His journal was intended to be the official narrative that demonstrated the national achievement of French Republican science and that was written “in the neutral, authoritative voice that would announce all the results—geographic, zoological, or botanical—of the collective endeavor of the expedition's scientists.”<sup>34</sup>

Following the deaths of Baudin's trusted collaborators, this ideal of collective achievement was no longer a factor of cohesion for the remaining savants and artists. It is then that the story of the team of Péron and Lesueur begins in earnest. This part of the story, recounted in Péron's *Voyage* and in the histories of the expedition, is well known, but its chronology can now be followed without effort in the recently published and lushly illustrated biography that reproduces all of the stages of Lesueur's life and the major works associated with them.<sup>35</sup>

There we can follow the joint itinerary of Lesueur and Péron, as they amassed more and more data on the sea animals they assiduously collected, discussed and prepared together on the second campaign of the *Géographe*, during the five-month sojourn in Sydney and the final leg of the voyage. As they worked, the slight deficiencies that Bory de Saint-Vincent had noted in Lesueur's work with regard to its scientific precision were gradually rectified,<sup>36</sup> and as Lesueur's knowledge as a naturalist blossomed under Péron's tutelage, so did his fine brushwork. Péron's friendship for Lesueur was as irreproachable as was Lesueur's toward him. Ambition did not cause Péron to leave his friend behind as he moved in more and more brilliant circles; they remained inseparable. When Péron's illness took hold, they travelled together to more gentle climes, by the shores of the Mediterranean, hoping for some improvement, but still pursuing their research into marine life and still collecting specimens with the kinds of implements they had learned to use on the formative voyage to the southern hemisphere.<sup>37</sup> After Péron's death, Lesueur sought other partnerships in science that would take him to other shores, from England, to the West Indies, and eventually to America, where he remained for 21 years.<sup>38</sup> While his interests as a naturalist widened, he retained his ambition to complete the kinds of comprehensive studies of marine and aquatic life that Péron's influence and his own experience of systematic note-taking and sketching on the Australian voyage had dictated to him: studies such as the still incomplete work on the medusae and a project of his own, an Ichthyology of America. Without Péron, however, it was as though Lesueur, whose interests in molluscs was alive as ever, whose sketches were never short of exquisite,<sup>39</sup> and who was deemed by his close associates to be a particularly learned naturalist, lacked the energy or the will to do—either with his American patron William Maclure or by himself—what he had once accomplished in partnership with Péron. Only when Lesueur finally returned to his native littoral, did some of that intellectual confidence return to him, and his marine art enter into a new and final phase.

Charles-Alexandre Lesueur  
35217: In the Mediterranean,  
offshore from Nice, 1809  
Pencil, charcoal and ink on paper  
10 x 14 cm

© Collection Lesueur,  
Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle, Le Havre

Upon his definitive return to Le Havre in the 1840s, what Lesueur saw from the beaches that lay at the foot of the Cape of La Hève did not just call upon his expert attention as the naturalist and paleontologist he had become, or as an artist attracted by the finely graded and changing colours of its spectacular cliff face; the sight he now saw at the Cape deeply disturbed him. Struck by the degradation of his native littoral, he expressed the need to “defend” this coastal strip, this fragile liminal zone that, as he could see, not only bore witness to environmental change but was itself constantly at threat from man’s industry and the invasion of the sea.<sup>40</sup> The only defence that the artist-naturalist could offer was through his pens and brushes, but these were peculiarly well trained to express his thoughts and sentiments on the state of the ocean and its shores. After a lifetime spent travelling three continents and observing the great oceans of the globe, Lesueur had indeed developed his own art of the littoral, an original form of scientific art whose inspiration was drawn from the curious animals of oceans and shores that few before him had observed and rendered with such delicacy, but an art which itself occupied a liminal space, caught between two forms of expression, the purely artistic and the scientific. Nor was this the sum of what Lesueur brought to the cause of his art of the littoral. In his role as defender and spokesman of the coastal environment, this lucid observer was all too aware that human activity had endangered the Normandy littoral and that human intervention was all that could restore it. During the course of a lifetime, Lesueur had thus acquired an intellectual commitment in favour of his preferred subject, as well as a mastery of its representation. This is a contribution that is arguably even more vital today than when he first put to paper his exquisite images of the seas and shores of our world.



<sup>29</sup> François Péron, *Voyage de découvertes aux Terres australes*, vol. 1: *Historique*, Paris, Imprimerie impériale, 1807, p. 277.

<sup>30</sup> Facts noted by Michel Jangoux in “L’expédition du capitaine Baudin aux Terres australes” and in “François Péron: l’émergence d’un naturaliste”, in *Une petite ville, trois grands hommes*, Cérilly, 1999, p.145.

<sup>31</sup> Nicolas Baudin, Letter to A.-L. de Jussieu, MNHN, ms. 2082, 5.

<sup>32</sup> As the voyage progressed and Baudin’s close collaborators died, this record fell behind, and in fact ceased after the first stop-over in Timor. The task had become impossible, since the team ethos had vanished and, with it, the sense of a common goal. Baudin was even led to complain that his scientists would no longer show him their work, for fear he would steal their glory, Letter to A.-L. de Jussieu, MNHN, ms. 2082, 5.

<sup>33</sup> In his account of the voyage, the zoologist Bory de Saint-Vincent confirms this fact (*Voyage dans les quatre principales îles des mers d’Afrique fait par ordre du gouvernement pendant les années neuf et dix de la République (1801 et 1802)*, Paris, F. Buisson, 1804, vol. 1, p. 161).

<sup>34</sup> Carol E. Harrison, “Projections of the Revolutionary Nation: French Expeditions in the Pacific, 1791–1803”, *Osiris*, 24, 2009, p. 46.

<sup>35</sup> See Baglione and Crémère, *Charles-Alexandre Lesueur, peintre voyageur*.

<sup>36</sup> Bory de Saint-Vincent, *Voyage dans les principales îles*, t. 1, p. 161.

<sup>37</sup> See image CL, MHNH, 35217 in this catalogue.

<sup>38</sup> William Maclure became Lesueur’s patron for the second phase of his life’s work, but even though they remained friends and collaborators, and Lesueur developed new fields of expertise, and particularly geology, with Maclure during their joint travels, there is no evidence to suggest that Maclure occupied the same privileged place in Lesueur’s life.

<sup>39</sup> See the range of the marine studies by Lesueur in this catalogue, which gives examples of his work throughout his life and travels, from the Australian voyage to his later voyages with Maclure.

<sup>40</sup> CL, MHNH, 32124.

## HISTORICAL IMAGES

Ms 1743 (32989) n°: 680R:  
Envelope addressed to C.-A. Lesueur  
New Harmony, Indiana, USA  
Brushstrokes by Lesueur, undated  
© Bibliothèque Centrale, Muséum National  
d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris



Charles-Alexandre Lesueur  
Ms 1735 n°. 127: Reef-building  
stony coral, Nevis Island  
*Porites clavaria* (Lamarck, 1816)  
© Bibliothèque Centrale,  
Muséum National d'Histoire  
Naturelle, Paris





999. labyrinthina Linn p 370 218.  
Linné syst. Nat. p. 100 234 T. 16 f. 3. A.

1000/1

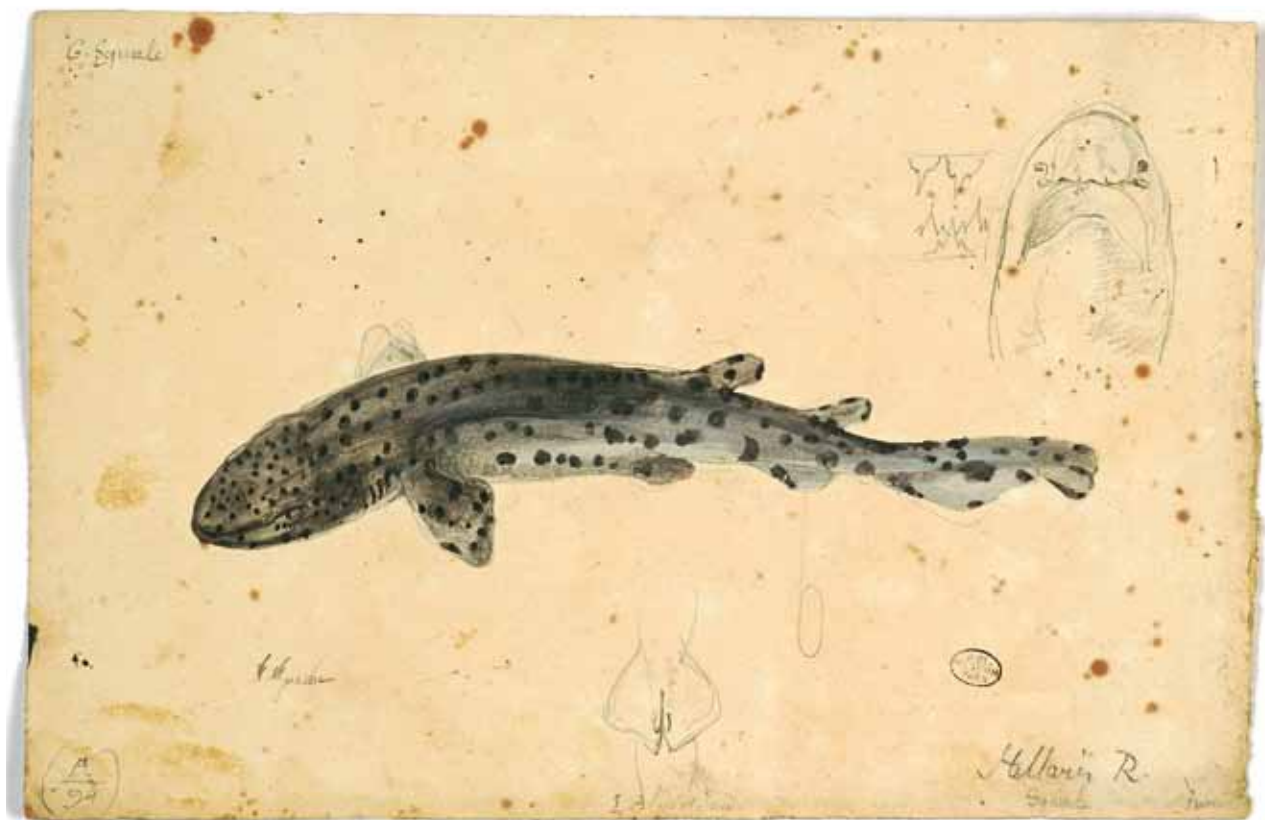


Charles-Alexandre Lesueur

Ms 1735 n° 113: Stony coral, Marsh's coral

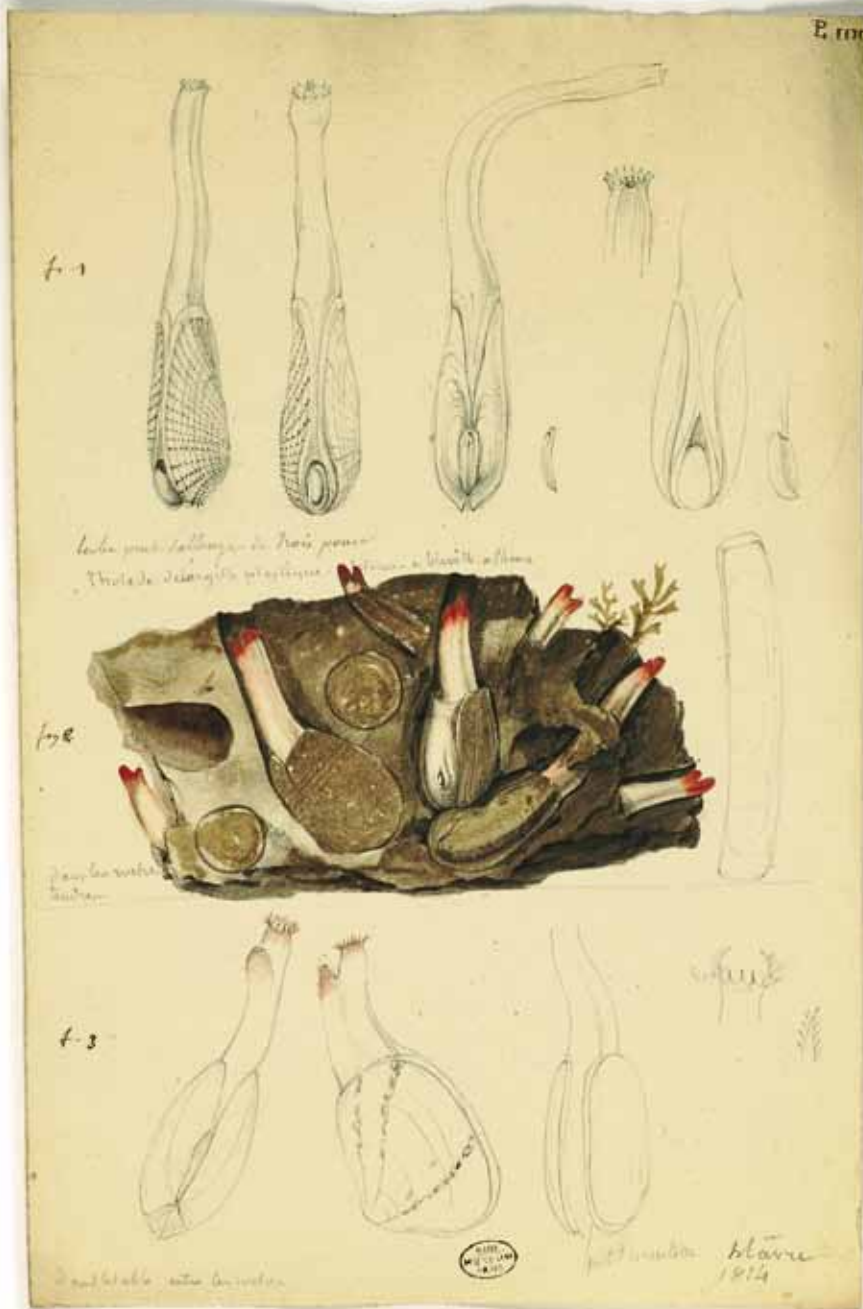
*Coscinarea marshae* (Well, 1962)

© Bibliothèque Centrale, Muséum National  
d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris



Charles-Alexandre Lesueur  
Ms 1731 Squale: Leopard shark  
*Stegostoma fasciatum* (Hermann, 1783)  
© Bibliothèque centrale, Muséum National  
d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris





Charles-Alexandre Lesueur  
 Ms 1738 (32984) 1814, fig. 1, 2, 3:  
 Angelwing clam (Mollusc: Bivalve),  
 Family Pholadidae, Le Havre, 1814  
 © Bibliothèque Centrale, Muséum  
 National d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris



Charles-Alexandre Lesueur

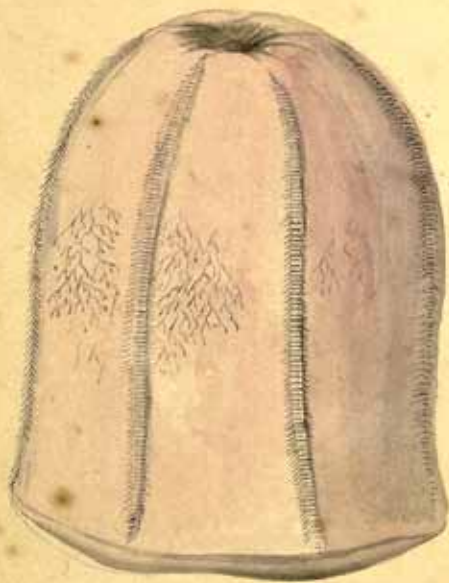
Ms 1738 (32984) n°. 399: Sea snails

(Mollusc: Gastropod)

Sea hare, *Aplysia*

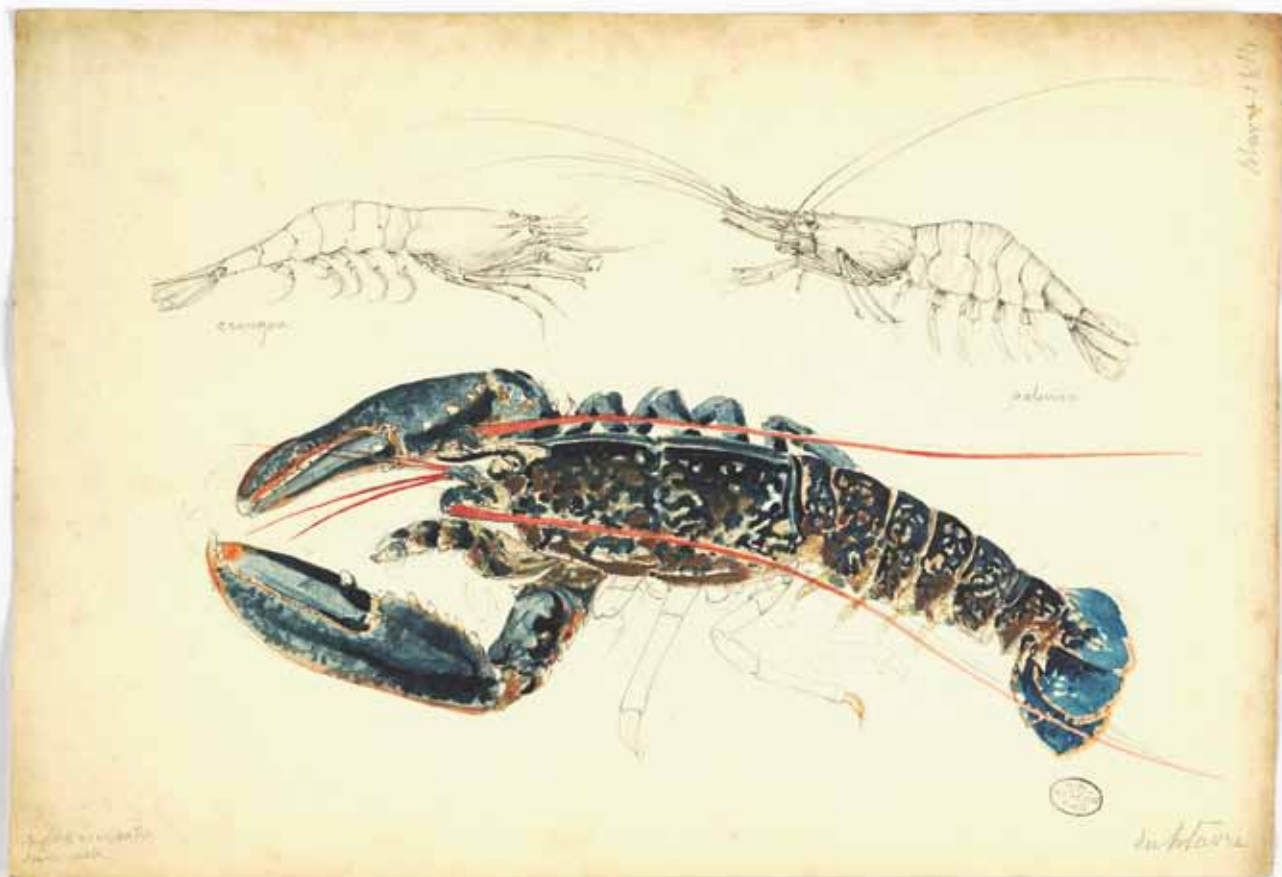
Key hole limpet, *Fissurella*

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d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris



*Beroë Incrassata*

Charles-Alexandre Lesueur  
Ms 1737 n° 240: Comb jelly (Ctenophora)  
*Beroë incrassata*  
© Bibliothèque Centrale, Muséum National  
d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris



Charles-Alexandre Lesueur  
Ms 1740 (1814) n°. 652: Shrimps and  
crayfish, Le Havre, 1814  
Crangon and palaemon, pencil  
European lobster, *Homarus gammarus*,  
watercolour  
© Bibliothèque Centrale, Muséum National  
d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris

Rio de Janeiro



Beroe - Corulata

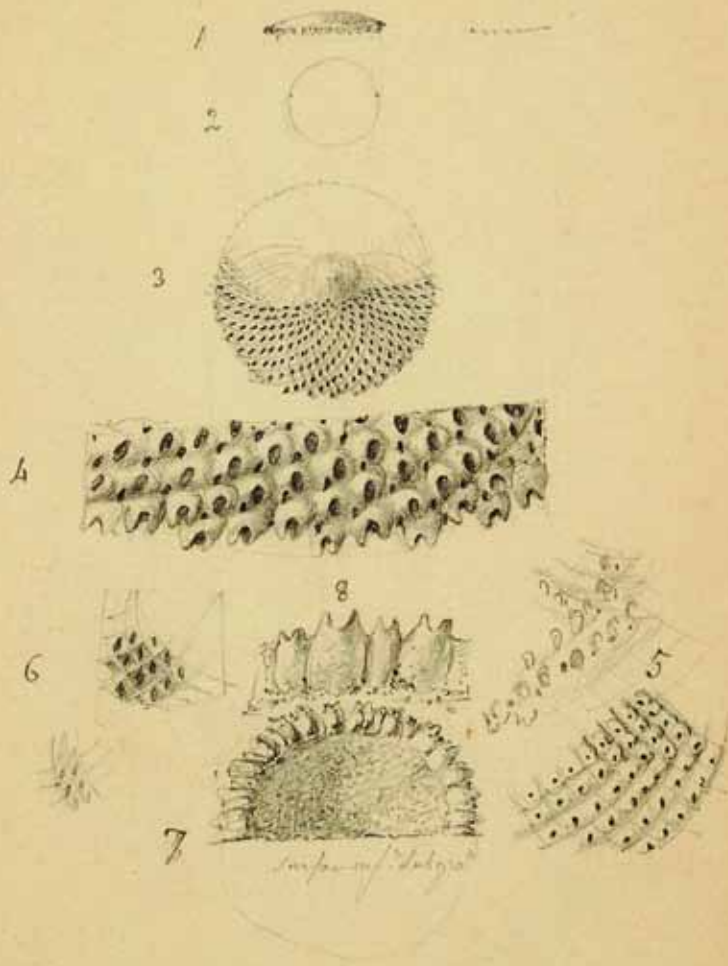
Bibliothèque de la J- Banque - pag. 10  
D'après les dessins de Parkinson, fait en 1783



Charles-Alexandre Lesueur  
Ms 1737 n°. 241: Comb jelly (Ctenophora),  
Rio de Janeiro  
*Beroe corolata*  
© Bibliothèque Centrale, Muséum National  
d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris



Charles-Alexandre Lesueur  
Ms 1742: Lace coral or Moss animal  
(Bryozoa), King George Sound  
*Flabellopora elegans* d'Orbigny, 1851  
© Bibliothèque Centrale, Muséum  
National d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris



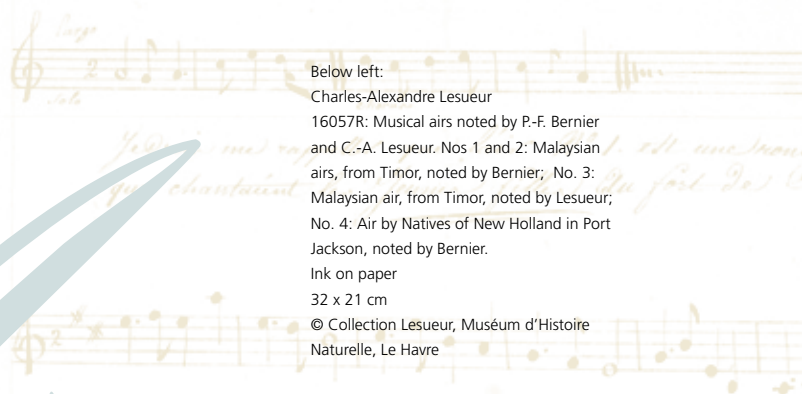
1u. *Elegans* Port J. R. George

V. x B. Voyage aux terres  
australes



# MUSIC FROM THE LITTORAL

Jean Fornasiero



Below left:  
Charles-Alexandre Lesueur  
16057R: Musical airs noted by P.-F. Bernier  
and C.-A. Lesueur. Nos 1 and 2: Malaysian  
airs, from Timor, noted by Bernier; No. 3:  
Malaysian air, from Timor, noted by Lesueur;  
No. 4: Air by Natives of New Holland in Port  
Jackson, noted by Bernier.  
Ink on paper  
32 x 21 cm  
© Collection Lesueur, Muséum d'Histoire  
Naturelle, Le Havre

The Baudin expedition was rich in its exchanges with indigenous Australians, namely because it had received detailed instructions on how to engage in such encounters and not least because its leader, Nicolas Baudin, who was a correspondent of the Society of Observers of Man,<sup>1</sup> impressed on his fellow voyagers the importance of their ethnographic mission.<sup>2</sup> As a result, numerous records of encounters between the expeditioners and Aboriginal people survive, not only in the commandant's own records, but also in the journals and reports of his staff, scientists and junior officers. The best known of these cross-cultural encounters are those relating to the peoples of Tasmania,<sup>3</sup> but much detail can also be gleaned from the exchanges that took place in Sydney, Westernport and different parts of Western Australia.<sup>4</sup>

Of course, the Baudin voyage, as an enterprise in maritime discovery, had neither the opportunity nor the means to conduct all of the wide-ranging surveys of social and cultural customs that philosopher Joseph-Marie Degérando had recommended on behalf of the Observers of Man.<sup>5</sup> The expedition was committed to the charting of unknown shores and was therefore destined, for the most part, to make short landfalls for the purpose of renewing supplies and making essential repairs.<sup>6</sup> As a consequence, most of the exchanges with indigenous peoples were fleeting and confined to the space of the littoral, to the beaches and strands of the Australian continent and its islands. However, of all of the metaphors that commonly apply to the littoral, those which evoke the frontier zone, where contrasting elements and forms of life come into contact, are peculiarly apt to describe the sites of cultural exchange. In the liminal zone of the littoral, cultures and peoples come together, in anger or in peace, their encounters inscribed within that space and within the memories and records of its inhabitants and visitors.



Philip Jones speaks eloquently of the possibilities afforded by “the historical moment of exchange” in the frontier zone,<sup>7</sup> and presents a series of compelling examples of how objects from the frontier “carry traces which one culture has left on the other”.<sup>8</sup> In that sense, the objects that the Frenchmen collected on the Australian littoral are no different, for they too bear traces of the cultural exchanges that produced them. And, in spite of the fleeting nature of many of the encounters, the traces that remain in museums and archives are indeed substantial. However, to date, these records have largely sought to interrogate the culture of the “Other” rather than to explore the nature of the cultural exchange itself.

Key records such as the journal of Nicolas Baudin and the voyage account of François Péron have thus been much consulted in recent years for historical and ethnographic commentary, as have the Aboriginal portraits and scenes executed by the artists of the expedition. Yet these sources still have much to reveal on the “historical moment of exchange”, while many of the lesser known journals kept by the scientists and officers of the expedition can still offer remarkable insights into the ambitions of the French to enter into cultural exchanges with indigenous peoples.<sup>9</sup> Take, for example, the journal of the zoologist, Stanislas Levillain. Levillain, who was on the *Naturaliste*, records a close encounter that took place in north-western Australia, a location where the expeditioners on the Baudin’s ship, the *Géographe*, were confronted by empty dwellings from which the occupants had just fled. The men of the *Naturaliste* were luckier: they did meet a group in Shark Bay, although the encounter was not what they had hoped.



Nicolas-Martin Petit  
2004: Bust of an Aborigine of  
New Holland  
Pastel, charcoal, ink and pencil  
25.9 x 23 cm  
© Collection Lesueur, Muséum  
d’Histoire Naturelle, Le Havre

- <sup>1</sup> Jean-Luc Chappey’s study of the Society of the Observers of Man is the authoritative work on this group. See his *La Société des Observateurs de l’Homme, 1799–1804*, Paris, Société des études robespierristes, 2002.
- <sup>2</sup> Evidence of Baudin’s “philanthropic” advice to his fellow expeditioners is to be found in a report made to him by the mineralogist Depuch. See *Mon voyage aux Terres australes: le journal personnel du commandant Baudin*, ed. J. Bonnemains, Paris, Imprimerie nationale, 2000, p. 250.
- <sup>3</sup> Thanks to the work of Brian Plomley, who published these particular records in English translation in *The Baudin Expedition and the Tasmanian Aborigines, 1802*, Hobart, Blubberhead Press, 1983.
- <sup>4</sup> Rhys Jones has given the most detailed overview to date of the encounters made by the expedition. See his essay, “Images of Natural Man”, in J. Bonnemains et al. (eds), *Baudin in Australian Waters*, Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1988, pp. 35–64.
- <sup>5</sup> For the text of these instructions see F.C.T. Moore (ed.), *The Observation of Savage Peoples by Joseph-Marie Degérando*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969.
- <sup>6</sup> This comment relates to the famous criticism of maritime expeditions expressed by Alexander von Humboldt in *Voyage aux régions équinoxiales du Nouveau Continent (Travels to the Equinoctial Regions of America)*, vol. 1, Paris, J. Smith, 1814, p. 2, where he remarks that voyages of discovery have perfected the arts of navigation to the detriment of the wider geographical knowledge that only systematic inland exploration could ensure.
- <sup>7</sup> Philip Jones, *Ochre and Rust*, Kent Town, Wakefield Press, 2006, p. 6.
- <sup>8</sup> Philip Jones, *Ochre and Rust*, p. 7.
- <sup>9</sup> The full range of journals will soon be available in French and in English on the website of the *Baudin Legacy* project, which was funded by the Australian Research Council, with the brief to make all of this material accessible to researchers.





George Tobin  
*In Adventure Bay, Van Dieman's Land,*  
 1792  
 26 x 18.5 cm (image size)  
 © Mitchell Library, State Library of New  
 South Wales

"We saw and conversed with them every day, while waiting for a favourable wind to allow us out of the channel. We met on the beach or a little way inland." p. 347  
 Francois Péron, *Voyage of Discovery to the Southern Lands*, trans. Cornell, vol. 1, Adelaide. Friends of the State Library of South Australia, 2006, p. 117.

They had clearly been impatient to win over their new acquaintances with gifts, and also through cultural exchanges, in the form of play and performance, but their well-intentioned overtures were rejected:

From the moment we saw this land (which we took to be an island, but which all of our explorations seem to point to being, in fact, the continent), we saw fires and went to the spot they appeared to come from, but, since then, we have had no opportunity to get close to them. They seem to have left. However, on the evening of the day we set up camp, Citizen Brue, midshipman, Citizen Saint-Cricq, officer, and two others approached a fire they had spotted during the night, carrying with them some objects they intended to give them as presents. Among other things, Mr Brue had a little marionette that he made to dance or leap for them. Either they did not care for it or they were of a vicious disposition, for one of the natives picked up a burning log and hurled it at Mr Brue who was hit in the stomach by the lit end, which burned his jacket, shirt and skin and caused him great suffering.<sup>10</sup>

That they themselves may have committed a breach of protocol did not occur to the disappointed Frenchmen. However, they did retreat without further violence or loss of life, with their "philanthropic" or non-violent position unchanged.<sup>11</sup>

As they had hoped, and as the experience of the D'Entrecasteaux expedition a decade earlier had taught them, the southern shores would offer greater opportunities to establish meaningful forms of contact. In lengthier stays on Bruny Island or Bennelong Point, the French were finally able to record the types of cultural information their scientific counsellors had requested. Establishing a basic form of communication with indigenous peoples was, of course, a feature of the scientific voyages of the time; by collecting items of vocabulary from Maria Island, for example, Baudin's men were consciously building upon the work of the previous French voyage led by D'Entrecasteaux. However, the variety and number of the traces that Baudin, Péron and their companions recorded of the artistic and cultural expression of the populations of the D'Entrecasteaux Channel and Port Jackson provide evidence that they had more sophisticated aims in mind. Indeed, from the various records, it is possible to speculate that they intended to follow Degérando's specific advice on recording music and painting. That is, to document artistic exchanges with the intention of understanding "the ideas attached to them" and the "reflective" or emotional needs to which such activities respond.<sup>12</sup>

Charles-Alexandre Lesueur or  
 Nicolas-Martin Petit  
 18003: Coastal view with  
 Aborigines and canoe. Incorrectly  
 annotated as 'Inhabitants of  
 Geographe Bay', given the presence  
 of a Tasmanian canoe.  
 Pencil  
 7.5 x 23.5 cm  
 © Collection Lesueur, Muséum  
 d'Histoire Naturelle, Le Havre



In pursuit of this aim, they collected artefacts, drew portraits of Aboriginal subjects and scenes of their customs and ceremonies—in both pristine and colonial contexts—and carefully recorded their observations in journals, letters and reports. Most famously, during the five-month stay of Baudin and his men in Sydney in 1802, they collected the first known examples of Aboriginal artwork composed using European materials<sup>13</sup> and of Aboriginal music, notated by the astronomer, Pierre-François Bernier.<sup>14</sup> These last two items certainly demonstrate the genuine desire of the French to engage in cultural exchange, but they have attracted little detailed analysis, other than references to their hybrid nature and to the distorted view they offer of the original product.<sup>15</sup> While this is indisputable, and understandable, it also is important to interrogate these artefacts as the products of culture contact, as objects that “carry information and ideas passing between the cultures of the collectors and the collected.”<sup>16</sup> In the absence of specialist commentary on the technicalities of this particular product, the expedition records can still offer insights into the circumstances of the exchange.

Surprisingly too, in the case of the journals, historians and anthropologists have more often noted the expedition’s failure to address their instructions comprehensively on cultural matters,<sup>17</sup> than engaged with the finer detail of all that the expeditioners attempted or intended to carry out.<sup>18</sup> Yet these records are eloquent on the topic of exchange and communication and are of interest as much for their intentions as for their achievements. In their mission to enter into the cultural and intellectual life of the Aboriginal, the voyagers predominantly use language and song as means of judging the qualities of concentration, attentiveness and emotional receptivity recommended to their attention by Degérando. The commander comments more than once upon the quick understanding of the French or English languages that the Aborigines displayed. Baudin recounts in D’Entrecasteaux Channel: “We said various words for them, which they repeated very clearly, and I was amazed, even, at the small amount of trouble they had.”<sup>19</sup> And later in Port Jackson he notes “that they have made more progress in the English language than the English have made in theirs.”<sup>20</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Stanislas Levillain, *Journal*, Archives Nationales, Marine Series, 5J1 52. Translation by Jean Fornasiero.

<sup>11</sup> As Tim Flannery states, the French “did not lift a gun in fear or anger at the Aborigines”, *Terra Australis*, Melbourne, Text Publishing, 2000, p. xii.

<sup>12</sup> F.C.T. Moore (ed.), *The Observation of Savage Peoples* by Joseph-Marie Degérando, pp. 97-98 and p. 87.

<sup>13</sup> Several versions of the “Drawings done by Natives”, including those prepared for publication in the *Atlas* of the second edition of the *Voyage aux Terres australes* of 1824, are to be found in the Lesueur Collection in the Muséum d’Histoire Naturelle du Havre (for example 16054). Some anthropologists contest whether these drawings were actually done by Aborigines, but the title would indicate that they were.

<sup>14</sup> Different versions of musical notation in Timor and New South Wales are to be found in the records of the Baudin voyage, as well as in the *Atlas* of the 1824 edition of the voyage narrative. The handwritten notation in the Lesueur Collection of the Muséum d’Histoire Naturelle du Havre (16507) informs us that the New South Wales music was notated by Bernier.

<sup>15</sup> Jennifer Newsome and Ashley Turner have neatly summed up the current musicological thinking on this piece. See “Early Perspectives on Aboriginal Music in South Australia”, *SONUS*, 26, 2, Spring 2006.

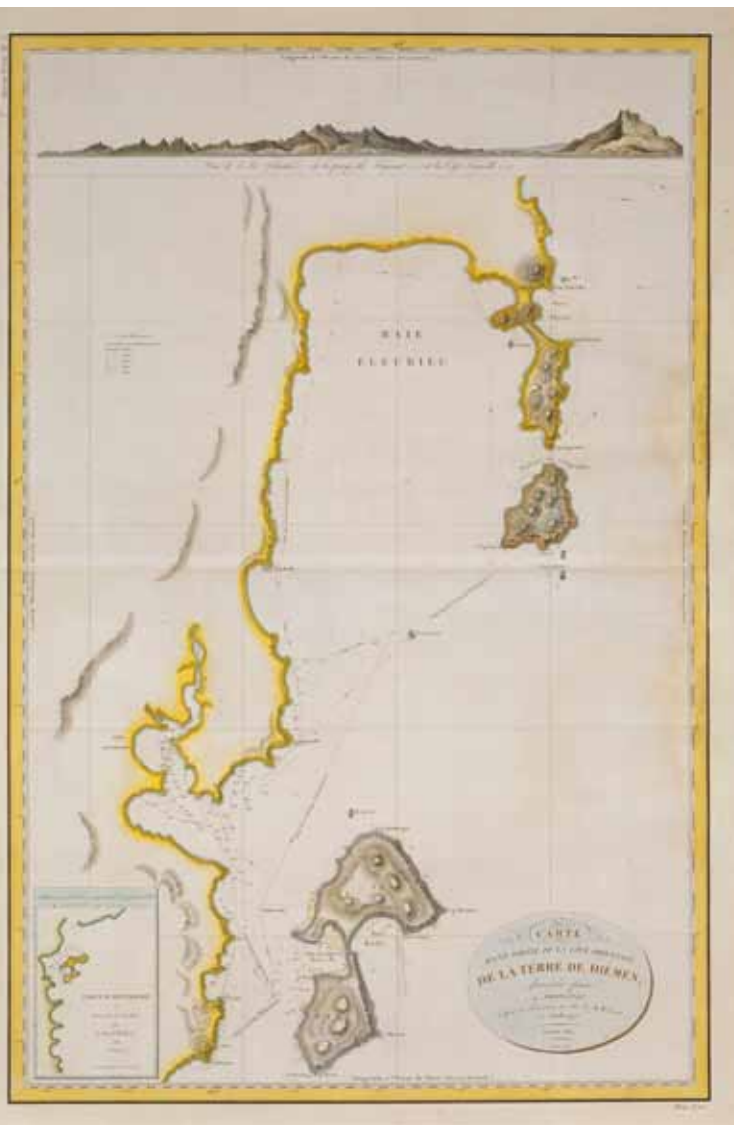
<sup>16</sup> Philip Jones, *Ochre and Rust*, p. 6.

<sup>17</sup> For example, F.C.T Moore is scathing about what he calls “the miscarriage suffered by a newly conceived science”, the failure of the anthropological enterprise that he attributes largely to Péron. See *The Observation of Savage Peoples* by Joseph-Marie Degérando, pp. 41-42.

<sup>18</sup> Even the comprehensive summary of cultural practices provided by Brian Plomley in *The Baudin Expedition and the Tasmanian Aborigines, 1802*, does not include an analysis of the references to song.

<sup>19</sup> *The Journal of Post-Captain Nicolas Baudin*, trans. C. Cornell, Adelaide, Libraries Board of South Australia, 1974 (re-issued 2004), p. 321.

<sup>20</sup> Letter from Baudin to Antoine-Laurent de Jussieu, dated 20 brumaire, an 11 [11 November 1802], published in the *Annales du Muséum d’Histoire Naturelle*, 2, 1803, p. 421.



Louis Freycinet (cartographer),  
Bouclet (engraver)  
R1998.40.35: Carte d'une partie de la  
côte orientale de la Terre de Diémen  
(Chart of part of the Tasmanian east  
coast from north of Bicheno including  
Schouten and Maria Islands), 1802

© Lamprell Collection, Tasmanian  
Museum and Art Gallery and Maritime  
Museum of Tasmania

That they had a good ear and capacity for mimicry is also recorded in the journal of Pierre-Bernard Milius, who comments admiringly on the English pronunciation of Bennelong,<sup>21</sup> and in the official account by Péron, when he describes how a young woman imitated the singing of the doctor of the *Naturaliste*, Jérôme Bellefin, “in an extremely original and very droll manner”, before confidently launching into a song of her own.<sup>22</sup>

Music was clearly the factor that enabled the most pleasant and mutually satisfying encounters, in contrast to the tense moments when power relations came into play. Further, the musical performances exchanged in Tasmania were not necessarily part of a ritual or ceremony, performed as a show, of the type that the French later witnessed in Sydney, and of which they also left pictorial records.<sup>23</sup> On the contrary, the songs which the Frenchmen heard immediately upon making landfall in D’Entrecasteaux Channel seemed to accompany the unpremeditated events of everyday living, as the entry in Baudin’s journal suggests:

As soon as they came up, Mr Leschenault took them by the hand, embraced them and gave them some presents. Mutual trust was immediately established, and from then on they followed the naturalist wherever he went. Sometimes they talked amongst themselves, sometimes they sang. One of them was wearing a necklace of fairly well-polished shells which he gave to him.<sup>24</sup> Such informal musical exchanges were not therefore uncommon; Péron mentions on two occasions the singing of Dr Bellefin and the emotional response that this appeared to elicit in the people who listened attentively to them, the children jumping for joy, the men amused and perplexed, the women responding by dancing, face-painting and, of course, singing.<sup>25</sup>

As “observers of man”, the expeditioners were, in fact, more likely to be self-conscious performers than their subjects. Dr Bellefin, it must be remembered, sang the highly ceremonial *Marseillaise* at one of these encounters, thus positioning himself, intentionally or unintentionally, as a representative of his culture. However, the overt intention that dictated this choice was, according to Péron, “scientific”: the song was chosen for the emotional charge that it was deemed to convey and hence for the possibility that it offered of understanding something of the psychology of the “good Vandieminites”. Péron states this quite explicitly when he reveals that the musical offering was designed “less to entertain them than to discover what effect our songs would have upon them”.

In this he was conforming to Degérando's instructions to evaluate the concentration, the cultural practices and the capacity for emotion of his subjects. And he was not disappointed, in that the subjects of his musical experiment were stirred by the performance of "this strong, war-like music"—whether or not this was because it awakened the precise emotions of enthusiasm and admiration that Péron attributed to the listeners. After the first song, a contrast was offered in the form of "light, tender little airs". Here again Péron draws conclusions that his limited grasp of his subjects' musical culture and mores did not permit, since he assumes that the tender emotions did not affect them to the same degree as the war-like anthem, but he does credit them with a depth of rational understanding, for he is convinced that "the natives certainly grasped their actual meaning".<sup>26</sup> This interesting comment shows his belief that emotional communication had actually occurred between the two groups in the course of the musical encounter. As loaded with preconceptions as some of Péron's comments are,<sup>27</sup> they do highlight the value which the French placed on music as a means of fostering shared emotion and removing cultural barriers to communication. The fact that musical exchanges and notations continued to be part of their experience in Sydney and in Timor is proof enough of their belief in the value of musical conversation.

As the French participated in more and more encounters, both ceremonial and informal, when music was performed for them by their hosts, they must surely have come to realise that music, and art, were as central to the indigenous cultures they encountered as they were to their own, and perhaps even, to quote Andrew Sayers' memorable expression, that "they had stepped into a land covered with art".<sup>28</sup> This in turn would explain the care for detail that characterises their notations and representations of Aboriginal art and their decision to feature them among their achievements. In this way, the traces of their musical encounters provide as many insights into their own idea of themselves and their mission as they do into the cultural practices of the men and women who sang to them 200 years ago on the contact zone of the Australian littoral.

<sup>21</sup> Pierre-Bernard Milius, *Voyage aux Terres australes*, Besançon, Editions La Lanterne magique, 2009, p. 179.

<sup>22</sup> François Péron, *Voyage of Discovery to the Southern Lands*, trans. C. Cornell, vol. 1, Adelaide, Friends of the State Library of South Australia, 2006, p. 200.

<sup>23</sup> The sketch by Lesueur of a corroboree in Port Jackson is evidence of such ceremonial occasions. See 16008, Lesueur Collection, Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle, Le Havre.

<sup>24</sup> *The Journal of Post-Captain Nicolas Baudin*, p. 302.

<sup>25</sup> Péron, *Voyage*, trans. Cornell, vol. 1, p. 182, p. 181, p. 200.

<sup>26</sup> Péron, *Voyage*, trans. Cornell, vol. 1, p. 181.

<sup>27</sup> This reproach is formulated by Brian Plomey in his presentation of Chapter 12 of Péron's *Voyage de découvertes aux Terres australes*, although he tempers his criticism of Péron by highlighting the savant's ability to present the indigenous inhabitants of Tasmania as "living people". See *The Baudin Expedition and the Tasmanian Aborigines, 1802*, p. 17.

<sup>28</sup> Andrew Sayers, *Australian Art*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001, p. 9.





## THE ARTISTS

Aadge Bruce

Chris De Rosa

Julie Gough

Beverley Southcott

Toni Warburton

Judy Watson

Aadje Bruce  
*EVIDENCE*, 2009  
any kind of discarded plastic  
dimensions variable  
photography the artist  
image courtesy the artist  
© the artist



## AADJE BRUCE

**Aadje Bruce**, BA Fibre Textiles, Kunstnijverheids school/Rietveldt Academie, Amsterdam, 1957; BA, Curtin University, 1990 and M.A. Sculpture, Curtin University, Perth, 1995. Exhibited in Holland, Oman, Australia, America. Most recent solo exhibitions: *Repetition*, 1997, and *Domestic Bliss*, 1996, both at Artplace, Perth and group exhibitions, artroom5, Adelaide, 2008; *Shapes*, 2009, and *Mermaid*, 2008, both at Avon Colorado, USA.

Aadje Bruce now lives near the coast in WA but grew up during WWII in Europe and this has had an enduring influence on the way she approaches her art. Aadje takes found items home, and cleans and re-assembles them. The reworked arrangements do not pay attention to the original purpose of the found items. Aadje starts a narrative through the combination of different items in a work and she does not feel the need to take refuge in the subtle nuances or aesthetic qualities of aged materials. Plastic bags and packaging discarded in carparks and on beaches, blown to the sea by the wind, and the rubbish thrown overboard from passing vessels remain in the oceans forever as they do not disintegrate into the environment, they become a threat. Aadje has watched reports about how the tiniest bits of floating plastic are mistaken for food and are swallowed by marine creatures. Some "modern" birds even use bits of torn bags in the weaving of their nests. She hopes to remind us about how dangerous and menacing bits of broken-up plastic can be for any kind of hungry animal.



Chris De Rosa  
*Liminal lace* (detail), 2010  
etching, digital inkjet print,  
linocut, on magnani paper  
and lino  
90 cm (w) x 105 cm (l)  
photography Michal Klvanek  
image courtesy the artist  
© the artist



## CHRIS DE ROSA

**Chris De Rosa**, Diploma of Art, 1992, North Adelaide School of Art, has completed commissions such as the Willaston Baby Memorial for Gawler Council and conducted solar plate workshops for Country Arts SA at Anangu Pitjantjatjara Lands. Recent exhibitions: artroom5 Adelaide, 2008 and 2009; Helen Stephens Gallery, Sydney, 2008; *Abstract Friends*, Middleton Mill; the Swan Hill Print and Drawing Award, 2008 and the *Tamworth Fibre Textile Biennial*, 2006.

Chris began collecting seaweed from local beaches, scanning and manipulating images and bringing these on to printing plates and overlaying images of used domestic lino. The floor of the ocean and the domestic floor blended into a layered "calenture". Calenture was a delirium suffered by sailors on early voyages. Gazing out on the ocean, suffering from the privations during a long voyage, sailors imagined they were seeing the green fields of home. Chris refers to this malady in describing the migrant experience.

A legend of a young Venetian seafarer, Polo, who brought his beloved Dolfina a stalk of seaweed from the far, distant seas wove its way into my imagination. The weed I was collecting was truly wonderful, frayed, hole-ridden and encrusted with marine salt. It seemed as though it had been fashioned by the sirens. In the legend, when Dolfina saw the weed she was concerned at its fragility. To preserve its beauty, she took a needle and thread and painstakingly copied it, tracing out the seaweed's design until it became lace.

Chris swims across Horseshoe Bay, Port Elliot, SA, through the sea grass forest, winter and summer, a popular bay for whale viewing.



Julie Gough  
*Manifestation (dusk), Bruny Island,*  
2009–2010  
timber, iron, shells  
dimensions variable  
photography the artist  
image courtesy the artist  
© the artist

## JULIE GOUGH

**Julie Gough**, PhD (Visual Arts), University of Tasmania, Hobart, 2001; MA (Visual Arts), Goldsmiths College, University of London, 1998. In 2006 Julie was awarded a State Library of Tasmania Fellowship for a project *Picturing our past: a narrative response to representations of Indigenous Tasmania*, a State Library of Victoria Creative Fellowship, and a two-year Visual Arts and Crafts Board Fellowship from the Australia Council for the Arts. Julie has undertaken art residencies across Australia and in Mauritius, New York and Paris.

Recent exhibitions: *The Clemenger Contemporary Art Award*, NGV, 2009–2010; *RIVERS RUN* (solo), Cairns Regional Gallery, 2010; *Fugitive History* (solo), Bett Gallery, Hobart, 2008; *The Ranger*, South Australian School of Art Gallery, University of South Australia, 2007; *interrupted – Renditions of unresolved accounts* (solo), Turner Galleries, Perth, 2007; *Musselroe Bay* (solo), Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi, Melbourne, 2007; *Thresholds of Tolerance*, ANU, 2007; *An Other Place*, Long Gallery, Hobart, 2007; *70% Urban*, National Museum of Australia, Canberra, 2007; *Biennale of Sydney*, 2006 and the *Tamworth Textile Biennial*, 2006. Gough was guest curator at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery developing the exhibition: *Tayenebe–Tasmanian Aboriginal women’s fibre work* that opened July, 2009, and held a residential Fellowship at Manning Clark House in the same year, transcribing MS3251 for online publication, depositions from 1820–1850s Van Diemen’s Land held in the National Library.

Julie’s work uncovers and re-presents historical stories, re-evaluating the impact of the past on our present lives. Much of the work refers to her own and her family’s experience as Tasmanian Aboriginal people and is concerned with developing a visual language to express and engage with conflicting and subsumed histories. A central intention of Gough’s art is to invite a viewer to a closer understanding of our continuing roles in, and proximity to, unresolved national stories.

*Manifestation* reflects on the flash point where cultures first crossed. Australian shores were a zone for untimely meetings. The work is a memory piece, peering, sending back a preternatural warning.





## BEVERLEY SOUTHCOTT

**Beverley Southcott** , MVA, Fine Arts, South Australian School of Art, University of South Australia, 2004.

Recent exhibitions: *ESP ari*, Sydney; *Just Is*, Max Dawn Gallery, Adelaide, 2009; and a solo show, *Other Worlds*, at Queensland Centre for Photography, Brisbane, 2009. In 2008 group exhibitions have been: *Creation–Cosmos and Chaos*, Flinders University and Adelaide College of Divinity, Centre for Theology, Science and Culture; artroom5, Adelaide; *Undercurrent 2008: Underlying Landscapes*, Kerry Packer Civic Gallery, University of South Australia; and a solo exhibition, *Elsewhere*, Barr Smith Library, University of Adelaide.

Beverley's new screen-based work further develops her concepts and ideas about the sea and local coastal urban areas. A focus is the marine environment and how its health impacts on our world today. The animated film footage of ocean tidal movements in *Re Seas* was shot at Somerton Park foreshore, Adelaide, South Australia.

In these works I contemplate new voyages, mental and philosophical, journeying imaginatively through past expeditions, re-viewing these in light of current environmental changes in our oceans.

The back and forward flow of the sea, meeting and retracting, offers a meditative way to consider life for the young artists and scientists on the Baudin voyage. The form of the film also alludes to the continual return of all things to the ocean, its acceptance of human interaction with it and its attempt to continually absorb. Of all the CO<sub>2</sub> emitted into the atmosphere, only half of it stays there; the rest goes into carbon sinks. There are two major carbon sinks in the biological cycle: the oceans and the land "biosphere", which includes plants and the soil.

Beverley Southcott  
*Re Seas*, 2010  
DVD, 4:3 PAL  
10 minute loop  
image courtesy the artist  
© the artist

Toni Warburton  
*garland/watercourse (part 3)*, 2009  
mixed media  
dimensions variable  
photography Jenni Carter  
image courtesy the artist and Mori  
Gallery, Sydney  
© the artist





## TONI WARBURTON

**Toni Warburton**, MVA, Sydney College of the Arts, University of Sydney, 2000; 2009 exhibitions have been with Peter Cooley in *Where We Know*, Wollongong City Gallery and at the MCA in *Making it New: Focus on Contemporary Australian Art*; *replacements: other drawing, reveries of the every day*, Tin Sheds Gallery, University of Sydney. Toni exhibits regularly with Mori Gallery in Sydney, most recently in December–January, 2006–2007 in *Lookout*. In 2007 Toni participated in an exhibition at Campbelltown Arts Centre, Sydney, in *Grounded: Artists, activism and the environment*. In 1986 Toni was awarded a Commonwealth Institute Fellowship and spent two years attached to Maharajah Sarajevo University in Vadodara, Gujerat. Her work became informed by her field trips and active research into Indian contemporary and classical, folk and tribal sculptural traditions in terracotta.

Toni has an ongoing interest in the natural cycles that play a part in the cultural and human history of particular places such as the sand flats and mapped fresh watercourses around Powderhulk Bay, Sugarloaf Bay and Bantry Bay in the upper estuarine reaches of Sydney Harbour. She continues to create works at Lagoon Point on the south coast of NSW about the aesthetic beauty of the headland heath, the salt-water rock pools on the rock platform of the littoral zone, shoreline ecosystems and flotsams as well as the sedges and freshwater life of the sand dune swales and lagoons. It is the process of the natural world as witnessed at particular sites and places that invigorates her practice.

Toni's *garland/watercourse (part 3)* combines aquatic elements with sound references, with the sieve evoking rain and the tambourine thunder.

Clockwise

Judy Watson

*sea fan*, 2009  
pigment and pencil on  
Spanish hand-made paper  
100.5 x 69.0 cm

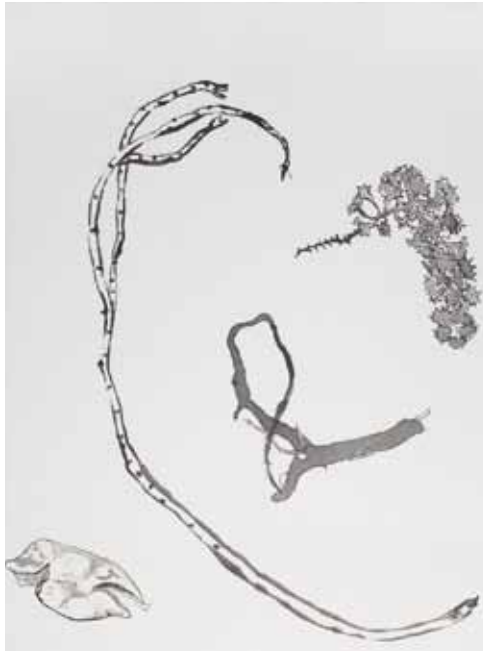
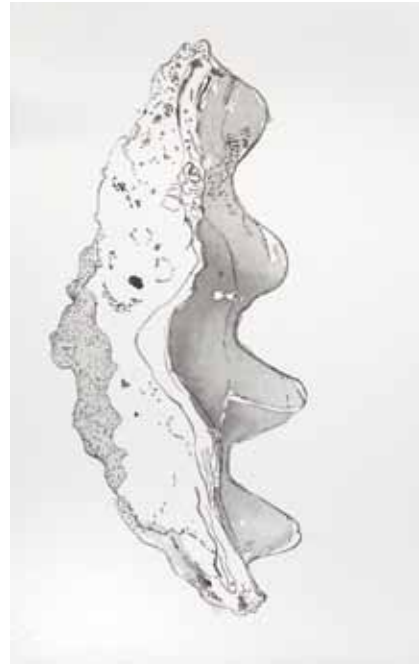
*clam*, 2009  
ink on paper  
37.5 x 28.0 cm

*pisonia*, 2009  
ink on paper  
27.5 x 37.5 cm

*seaweed, plants and  
turtle shell*, 2009  
ink on paper  
27.5 x 37.5 cm

photography Carl Warner

images courtesy the  
artist and Milani Gallery,  
Brisbane  
© the artist



## JUDY WATSON

**Judy Watson**, BA University of Tasmania, 1982, Grad Dip Visual Arts, Monash University, 1986. Judy was artist in residence at the University of Queensland's Heron Island Research Station, February 2009; the resulting works were exhibited in Heron island at UQ Art Museum, 2009. The Research Station is located within a World Heritage listed area and Judy absorbed details of research by Professor Ove Hoegh-Guldberg on coral bleaching and work by Dr Brad Congdon on the impact of alterations to sea temperatures and their impact on seabird populations. Dr Kathy Townsend presented research on new species of manta rays and on rubbish ingested by marine creature populations of Moreton Bay. Turtles were ingesting large quantities of clear plastic bags, probably mistaking them for jellyfish.


In 2009 Watson exhibited at Milani Gallery in *bad and doubtful debts* and in *Terra Nullius* at HALLE 14 in Leipzig, Germany, with Richard Bell, Vernon Ah Kee, Gordon Hookey, Mike Parr and other Australian artists. In 2008 Judy exhibited at Tolarno Gallery, Melbourne, in *the shadows of goya, aotearoa and the museum*; at Helen Maxwell Gallery in 2007 Judy exhibited *in the shadows of goya* and at Bellas Milani Gallery in 2007 exhibited *a complicated fall*.

In 2007 Judy was represented in *Culture Warriors: National Indigenous Art Triennial*, NGA and touring.

In 2009 this exhibition travelled to The Katzen University Art Museum in Washington.

Judy's work was shown in Sunshine State-Smart State, Campbelltown Arts Centre. Judy exhibited in the *XLVIII Venice Biennale* in 1997, *fluent*, with Emily Kame Kngwarreye and Yvonne Koolmatrie. The exhibition toured Australia.

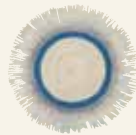
A major new monograph on the work of Judy Watson was released in 2009 by the Miegunyah Press (Melbourne University Publishing). *Judy Watson: blood language*, features colour reproductions of many of Judy's seminal works, including paintings, works on paper, and sculptural installations, with texts by Watson and Louise Martin Chew. Judy was based in Townsville for six years 1982–1985 and part of 1987, 1988 and 1989. She spent time snorkelling and diving on the reef and she was on the board of the North Queensland Conservation Council. Her interests in sea change, ecology and global warming are often demonstrated in her work. Her work takes its inspiration from the land and traditions of the Waanyi culture, her Aboriginal grandmother's people from north west Queensland.



*"... but nothing equalled the richness and beauty of the spectacle presented by the solid zoophytes, commonly known as madrepores. The entire beach was composed of these animals: all the rocks, upon which one could then walk with dry feet, were alive with them and were so strangely shaped, with colours so varied, rich and pure, that one's eyes were as if dazzled by them.*

*Here, the tubipora musica, very proud of the splendour of its dwelling, spread its beautiful, fringed, green tentacles: seeing its large, semi-globular masses on the water's surface, one might have taken them for so many green lawns resting on coral ground."*

Francois Péron, *Voyage of Discovery to the Southern Lands*, trans. Cornell, vol. 1, Adelaide, Friends of the State Library of South Australia, 2006, p. 117.



List of Works  
Contemporary  
Artists

**Aadje Bruce**  
EVIDENCE, 2009  
discarded plastic  
dimensions variable  
artwork courtesy the artist

**Chris De Rosa**  
*Liminal*, 2010  
etching, digital inkjet print, linocut,  
perforations, on magnani paper  
and lino  
dimensions variable  
artwork courtesy the artist and  
artroom5, Adelaide

**Julie Gough**  
*Manifestation*, 2009–2010  
timber, iron, shells  
dimensions variable  
artwork courtesy the artist

**Beverley Southcott**  
*Re Seas*, 2010  
DVD, 4:3 PAL  
10 minute loop  
artwork courtesy the artist

**Toni Warburton**  
*garland/watercourse (part 3)*, 2009  
mixed media  
dimensions variable  
artwork courtesy the artist and  
Mori Gallery, Sydney

**Judy Watson**  
*pisonia*, 2009  
ink on paper  
27.5 x 37.5 cm

**Judy Watson**  
*seaweed, plants and  
turtle shell*, 2009  
ink on paper  
27.5 x 37.5 cm

**Judy Watson**  
*Pods*, 2009  
ink on paper  
37.5 x 27.5 cm

**Judy Watson**  
*coral and shells*, 2009  
ink on paper  
27.5 x 37.5 cm

**Judy Watson**  
*pandanus*, 2009  
ink on paper  
27.5 x 37.5 cm

**Judy Watson**  
*Heron Island coral 1*, 2009  
ink on paper  
37.5 x 27.5 cm

**Judy Watson**  
*clam*, 2009  
ink on paper  
37.5 x 28.0 cm

**Judy Watson**  
*manta*, 2009  
pigment and pencil  
on cotton rag paper  
76.7 x 56.7 cm

**Judy Watson**  
*sea fan*, 2009  
pigment and pencil on  
Spanish hand-made paper  
100.5 x 69.0 cm

**Judy Watson**  
*Heron Island coral 2*, 2009  
ink on paper  
30 x 21 cm

**Judy Watson**  
*bleaching*, 2009  
pencil, pigment, acrylic  
on hand-made Spanish paper  
100.5 x 73.0 cm

**Judy Watson**  
*calcification rate*, 2009  
pencil, pigment, acrylic  
on hand-made Spanish paper  
101.0 x 73.0 cm

**Judy Watson**  
*bleaching*, 2009  
pigment, pencil and  
synthetic polymer paint  
on cotton rag paper  
56.7 x 76.7 cm

artwork courtesy the artist,  
Milani Gallery, Brisbane

*Personnel of Baudin Expedition to Australia  
(1800-1804)*

**Nicolas Baudin**, 46, post-captain, commandant of expedition; died Ile de France, 16 September 1803

**Jérôme Jean-Claude Bellefin**, 36, surgeon on *Naturaliste*; died Montevilliers, 3 August 1835

**Pierre-François Bernier**, 21, astronomer; transferred to *Géographe*, Ile de France, April 1801; died at sea, 5 June 1803

**Joseph Louis Michel Brue**, 18, midshipman on *Naturaliste*; transferred to *Géographe*; returned to France in *Naturaliste*; died Saint-Malo, February 1843

**Jean-Baptiste Geneviève Marcellin Bory de Saint-Vincent**, 22, zoologist; departed Ile de France, April 1801; died Paris, 22 December 1846

**Louis-Claude Desaulces de Freycinet**, 21, sub-lieutenant; given command of *Casuarina*, Port Jackson, 1802; rejoined *Géographe* at Ile de France, 1803; died Saulce-sur-Rhône, 18 August 1842

**Pierre-Guillaume Gicquel des Touches**, 30, lieutenant; departed Ile de France, April 1801; died Saint-Malo, 17 December 1824

**Jacques-Félix-Emmanuel Hamelin des Essarts**, 32, captain of *Naturaliste*; returned to France, 7 June 1803; died Paris, 23 April 1839

**Jean-Baptiste Louis-Claude Théodore Leschenault de la Tour**, 26, botanist; became ill and left expedition in Timor in 1803; returned to France in 1807; died Paris, 14 March 1826

**Charles-Alexandre Lesueur**, 22, named as assistant gunner 4th class, employed as artist; died Le Havre, 12 December 1846

**Stanislas Levillain**, 26, zoologist; died at sea, 23 December 1801

**René Maugé**, 42, zoologist; died offshore Maria Island, 20 February 1802

**Pierre-Bernard Milius**, 27, second-in-command of *Naturaliste*; fell ill and left expedition in Port Jackson; rejoined expedition in Ile de France; appointed commandant after Baudin's death; died Bourbonne-les-Bains, 11 August 1829

**François Péron**, 25, trainee zoologist on *Géographe*; became chief scientist of expedition; died Cérilly, 14 December 1810

**Nicolas-Martin Petit**, 23, named as assistant gunner 4th class, employed as artist; died Paris, 21 October 1804

**Anselme Riedlé**, 32, head gardener; died Timor, 21 October 1801

**Jacques de Saint-Cricq**, 19, sub-lieutenant on *Naturaliste*; died Carcassonne, 19 March 1819

Cover:

Charles-Alexandre Lesueur

Ms 1735 n°. 034: Sea Anemone

(Cnidaria Actinaria) (details)

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*Animal. ...*



*Grandine ...*