



# Endavouring Banks: Exploring Collections from the Endeavour Voyage 1768-1771

*Neil Chambers*

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When English naturalist Joseph Banks (1743–1820) accompanied Captain James Cook (1728–1779) on his historic mission into the Pacific, the Endeavour voyage of 1768–1771, he took with him a team of collectors and illustrators. They returned with unprecedented collections of artifacts and specimens of stunning birds, fish, and other animals, as well as thousands of plants, most seen for the first time in Europe. They produced, too, remarkable landscape and figure drawings of the peoples encountered on the voyage along with detailed journals and descriptions of the places visited, which, with the first detailed maps of these lands (Tahiti, New Zealand, and the east coast of Australia), were later used to create lavishly illustrated accounts of the mission. These caused a storm of interest in Europe where plays, poems, and satirical caricatures were later produced to celebrate and examine the voyage, its personnel, and many "new" discoveries.

Along with contemporary portraits of key personalities aboard the ship, scale models and plans of the ship itself, scientific instruments taken on the voyage, commemorative medals and sketches, the objects (over 140) featured in this book tell the story of the Endeavour voyage and its impact ahead of the 250th anniversary in 2018 of the launch of this seminal mission. Artwork made both during and after the voyage will be seen alongside actual specimens. By comparing the voyage originals with the often stylized engravings later produced in London for the official account, Endeavouring Banks investigates how knowledge gained on the mission was gathered, revised, and later received in Europe. Items that had been separated in some cases for more than two centuries are brought together to reveal their fascinating history not only during but since that mission. Original voyage specimens are featured together with illustrations and descriptions of them, showing a rich diversity of newly discovered species and how Banks organized this material, planning but ultimately failing to publish it. In fact, many of the objects in the book have never been published before.

Focusing on the contribution of Banks's often neglected artists? Sydney Parkinson, Herman Diedrich Spring, and Alexander Buchan, as well as the priest Tupaia, who joined *Endeavour* in the Society Islands? none of whom survived the mission, the surviving *Endeavour* voyage illustrations are the most important body of images produced since Europeans entered this region, matching the truly historic value of the plant specimens and artifacts that will be seen alongside them.

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