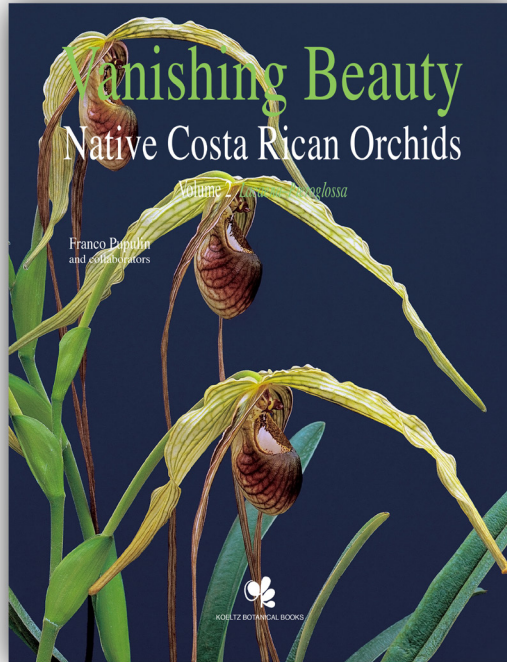


BOOKS

Vanishing Beauty. Native Costa Rican Orchids. Vol. 2: *Lacaena–Pteroglossa*, by Franco Pupulin and collaborators. Oberreifenberg, Germany, Koeltz Botanical Books, 2020. ISBN 978-3-946583-12-7. Large volume *in quarto* (25.5 × 33.0 cm), 578 pages (pp. 425–1003), 586 color photographs, one watercolor and six line drawings. Hardbound with dust jacket. 320.00 US\$.



This is the second installment in a projected three-volume series dedicated to Costa Rican orchids. Those who are fortunate to have access to the first volume will continue to be pleased with this second volume; those who have not seen the first volume will be astonished by the layout and photographs of the second volume, which, incidentally, is paginated consecutively with the first (the first volume ends on page 421; the second begins with page 422, if the opposite of the cover, a photograph of *Masdevallia attenuata* (Rchb.f.) Luer, is taken into account). The second volume has different covers than the first, not only in material but in dimensions (they are slightly larger by a few millimeters), and it is slightly heavier (ca. 2.6 kg the first and 3.5 kg the second, without dust jacket).

Pupulin and 17 collaborators (listed on pages 990–991) cover 58 genera and 539 species in this

volume, the latter profusely and lavishly illustrated with 586 color photographs, the vast majority captured by Franco Pupulin (images from five other photographers also appear). The genera are listed at the beginning of the book and these, like the included species, are listed at the end of the book in a detailed index of scientific names.

The authors also propose eleven novelties (listed on page 996), nine of which are new species that, in addition to being accompanied by photographs, are illustrated either with a digitization of the plant and flowers (in one case) or with drawings by various authors. One of the novelties, this time the extraordinary *Prescottia congesta* Pupulin, appears on pages 935–936 and not on 925–926, as indicated by the taxonomic novelties index.

As in the case of the first volume, the second one includes a detailed description of each genus, although

it goes a little further since they include in most cases the etymology of each genus. Two cases in particular show the dynamics of the Orchidaceae systematics in recent years: “*Maxillaria* Ruiz & Pav. and *Camaridium* Lindl.”, where the first genus represents “the true *Maxillarias*” under the circumscription accepted by the author (F. Pupulin), and the second a segregated who has been “jumping” in and out of *Maxillaria* for many years, but that the author accepts in this treatment and that, if accepted before, obviously would have appeared in the first volume. The second case is “*Oerstedella* Rchb.f.”, a genus that at the time the first volume was prepared was accepted by the author of the *Epidendrum* L. treatment (Eric Hágsater), and had been left for the second volume. However, today this circumscription does not have phylogenetic support, as the authors (E. Hágsater and E. Santiago) explain in detail, and the photographs of the species appear under *Epidendrum*.

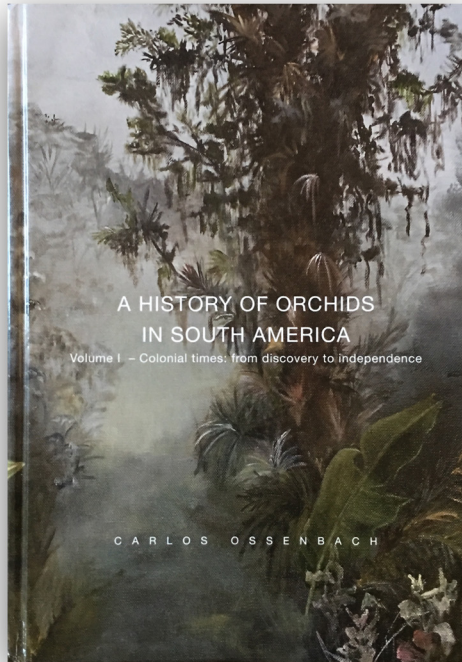
The second volume of *Vanishing Beauty* includes a whole series of genera of ornamental importance such as *Laelia* Lindl., *Lophiaris* Raf., *Lycaste* Lindl., the already mentioned *Maxillaria*, *Mormodes* Lindl., *Oncidium* Sw. (inexplicably including *Sigmatostalix* Rchb.f.), *Otoglossum* (Schltr.) Garay & Dunst., *Paphinia* Lindl., *Peristeria* Hook., *Pescatorea* Rchb.f., *Phragmipedium* (Pfitz.) Rolfe, *Polycynis* Rchb.f., *Prosthechea* Knowles & Westc. and *Psychopsis* Raf., among some others that, as already mentioned, are profusely illustrated. The exceptional quality of the photographs in this volume is especially evident in some genera of Pleurothallidinae, such as *Lepanthes* Sw., *Myoxanthus* Poepp. & Endl., *Octomeria* R.Br.,

Platystele Schltr., and *Pleurothallis* R.Br. *sensu stricto*, stand out for their clarity, sharpness, layout and species coverage. The photographs of this select group of Pleurothallidinae highlight not only the diversity of these genera in Costa Rica, but also the extraordinary ability of photographers (again, the vast majority of which are images of Franco Pupulin) to capture at high resolution this fascinating group of orchids; many of them imperceptible to the human eye (e.g., many of the *Platystele* species). Of course, among those interested in orchids, the Latin adage *de gustibus non est disputandum* prevails. This volume includes, as it is a comprehensive treatment of Costa Rican orchids, other genera whose images many consider less “attractive” (eg, *Microthelys* Garay), although they will undoubtedly win admirers and, in addition, appreciated by the avid orchidologist.

Although the price of this volume is relatively high, due to the print quality and the number of photographs it includes, it is recommended to all botanists and aficionados interested in the orchids of the American continent, especially those of Costa Rica and Central America, as well as those who have an interest in particular groups such as Pleurothallidinae, and all institutions that maintain libraries focused on tropical botany. Those who purchase it, will spend countless hours reading the text and admiring the photographs without a second thought to the cost.

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A history of orchids in South America. Volume 1 - Colonial times: from discovery to independence, by Carlos Ossenbach. Oberreifenberg, Germany, Koeltz Botanical Books, 2020. ISBN 978-3-946583-24-0. Volume *in ottavo* (26.0×18.5 cm), xvi, 646 p, 548 illustrations. Hardbound. 226.00 US\$.



If he's not in this book, it's because he didn't collect plants in South America...

Let me start trying to impress you with some figures, just as I was impressed by the first volume of *A history of orchids in South America*. Thirteen pages of Index of names (and this does not include the scientific names of plants, which sum another 13 pages). Seven pages of general Index. 548 illustrations (the Index of illustrations takes 11 pages), including color and black and white photographs, and color and black and white drawings. Fifteen pages of literature: you may need a few years of activity to consult them all. And, the main reason for owning and previewing this book, 564 pages of really enjoyable text.

Carlos Ossenbach never ceases to surprise us with his erudition and with his very personal way of telling the story of the discovery of orchids and their scientific learning in the frame of a more general history of people and the world. In many cases, this is the only possible approach to understanding the somewhat ordered *fil rouge* of history, that eventually

leads to the heroes of this narrative and their work in the midst of an apparently chaotic unraveling of facts. As the other books that Ossenbach has written on the history of orchids (*Orchids and orchidology in Central America: 500 years of history*, originally published in 2009 in this same journal and translated into Spanish in 2016, and *Orchids and Orchidology in the Antilles: An encyclopaedic history*, of 2016) also the first part of this planned South American trilogy (but will other two volumes be enough to complete the series?) offers a narrative of the story of botanical exploration in the context of the social, political and economic development of the region and the powers that concurred to its conquest.

One would not imagine that, to find the reasons for the exploration of the New World by monks of the size of Charles Plumier and Luis Éconches Feuillé, one must go back to the creation of a humble religious order of the fifteenth century and a convent built at Maire-en-Provence, around which extraordinary gardens of essences earned to its occupants the reputation of

“botanical monks” (chapter 10). Who would have imagined that, after having been the faithful shadow of Alexander von Humboldt during an extraordinary adventure of discovery in South America, Aimé Bonpland would also have contributed to making Josephine Bonaparte’s gardens in Malmaison a place to cultivate and study American plants during the age of French supremacy, to finally be the witness of his protector’s beheading (chapter 32)? Only by reading the pages of this book does it become clear why, in a historical perspective, the botany of the American regions under Spanish and Portuguese rule developed almost a century later than in those other regions which fell into the more liberal hands of the French, British and Dutch, and had to wait till the advent of the Enlightenment in the second half of the 18th century to inaugurate the first attempts to promote the direct observation of nature.

The grand scheme of things and the small events, the great stars of botany and the minor figures, crucial facts and anecdotes, all mix and interpenetrate through a narrative that reveals Ossenbach’s deep sympathy and respect for the myriad of characters who populate his book, as well as the author’s intimate pleasure in researching their biographies, in examining their contributions, in sewing them together in a coherent historiography.

Together with the reports of the great scientific expeditions financed by the Spanish Crown to its American colonies, of which those of Ruiz and Pavón in Peru and Chile (1777–1815) and José Celestino Mutis in Colombia and Ecuador (1783–1808) are of utmost importance, those sent from Portugal to explore the province of Rio de Janeiro, led by José Mariano da Conceição Vellozo, and the Amazon Basin with Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira, the development of a French botanical supremacy until 1800, the era of Linnaeus and the aforementioned Humboldt and Bonpland expedition to the New World, Ossenbach follows the routes - often unpredictable - of a large number of other botanical feats, often

almost unknown, and the exploits of countless individuals who helped reveal the orchid richness of the South American continent. Six short chapters of “Geographical landmarks” interspersed with the narrative help the reader to focus on the complex physical and political geography of South America during the 16th to 18th centuries. In the Appendixes to the book, a very useful, chronologically arranged “Timeline”, allows visualizing with a single glance the years, the protagonists, the places visited and the major publications of this incredible crowd of characters: in the words of the author himself, “eighty main players and dozens of supporting actors”.

The first volume of the South American story comes to its end with the independence of Brazil and the Spanish colonies in the third decade of the 19th century and, according to the editor, we will have to wait until late 2021 to see the second part.

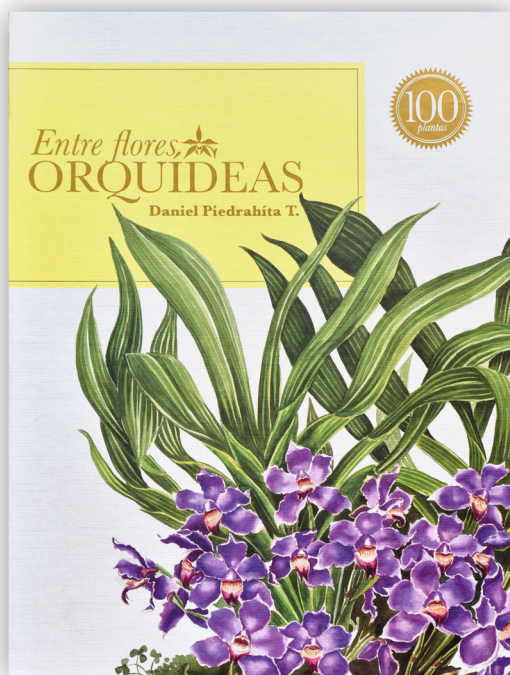
The illustrations, copious and varied, include portraits, engravings and sketches of landscapes, covers of printed works, manuscript pages, and a large number of magnificent and often unpublished drawings of orchids, which alone represent a sort of encyclopedia of botanical illustration in South America, and a very pleasant way to accompany reading.

My only criticism to this beautiful work is the mixed use of original scientific names (basionyms) and subsequent combinations that the author adopts in the text and in the captions to the illustrations, in an attempt to keep up to date with the most recent and accepted nomenclatural changes. It is a titanic undertaking, as we well know, and which perhaps goes beyond the need for a narrative that is primarily of a historical nature.

This is a book that, in my opinion, should not be missing in any serious library of botany and history, and certainly even less in that of the orchid enthusiast.

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Entre Flores, Orquídeas, by Daniel Piedrahita Thiriez. La Ceja, Antioquia, Colombia, Entre Flores (printed by Especial Impresores), 2019. Large volume *in quarto* (30×40 cm). Numbered edition of 300 copies, 238 pages, 100 illustrations in color, 100 photographs. Hardbound with cover box.



Offering a book is a sharing, a token of friendship, and if I ventured to measure the weight of this friendship against the weight of the book, it is truly invaluable.

After the amazement at first glance at the cover, it was with curiosity and excitement that I discovered the exceptional book of Daniel Piedrahita Thiriez brought back from Colombia by friends.

“*Entre Flores, ORQUÍDEAS*” is a large format book, illustrated by Emmanuel Laverde B. and Paula Andrea Romero, which presents itself in a marvelous pearl gray and golden box illuminated by an illustration of *Pescatoria coelestis*, then a ribbon allowing you to lift another cardboard revealing by its window a lovely painting of *Lepanthes helgae*, shuddering under the wind, which seems to welcome the reader.

And finally, the book! Rarely so much refinement has been brought to an edition. The texture of the paper, the quality of the print, the colors, the layout, the beautiful botanical illustrations, all of this contributes to real enchantment.

Then, at the bottom of the box, still another surprise... a beautiful golden yellow envelope containing around twenty remarkably reproduced illustrations, on heavyweight paper, ready to be framed.

“*Entre Flores*” is the culmination of a dream, an initiative to teach and promote the conservation of the immense biodiversity of flora and fauna in Colombia. An agronomist by academic training, and a renowned ornithologist, Daniel Piedrahita is in perpetual wonder at the luxuriant vegetation during his morning escapades in the “*selva*”. It is with generosity that he shares his passion for nature and his experience as a professional grower, thus making the beauty, the luxuriance and diversity of the Orchidaceae family accessible to the reader.

On his property near Medellín, where *Hydrangea* cultures rub shoulders with the large greenhouses that accommodate his collection of orchids, more than 3000 species as well as a multitude of hybrids, have been an inexhaustible source of inspiration for

Emmanuel Laverde and Paula Andrea Romero. They are the founders of the conservation society “Arte y conservación” in Bogotá (Colombia), and authors of several illustrated publications, two remarkable naturalist and botanical artists whose illustrations, precise and lively, beautifully accompany the text.

The book contains a selection of 100 plants organized by suprageneric groups, both formal and informal. A presentation of the selection of few genera from which the 100 illustrated species are extracted, introduces the work. They are very well documented and didactic texts, indicating the parameters of the natural habitats as well as numerous detailed tips for the cultivation of the different genera.

At the core of the book, each species is presented in a double page, where the beautiful watercolor illustrations combine precision with an extremely vivid artistic representation of the plant. On the left page there is the scientific information about the species, its taxonomy, distribution and natural habitat, as well as a scale indicating the actual size of the illustrated specimens.

The treated groups are “Vandae” (including species of Angraecinae, Aerangidinae, and Aeridinae), Pleurothallidinae (7 genera), Oncidiinae and Zygopetalinae (both with 6 genera), Stanhopeinae and Lycastinae (3 genera each), *Epidendrum*, and informal groups of “Miniatures” (mostly Pleurothallidinae), “Terrestrial” (with 4 genera), and “Foreigner species” (including *Coelogyne*, *Dendrobium*, *Dendrochilum*, and *Mediocalcar*).

Two chapters are reserved for terrestrial species as well as hybrids. All the specimens represented are cultivated in the greenhouses of Daniel Piedrahita T. The book concludes with a series of 100 small photographs of the actual flowers of the species illustrated in watercolor, and a Glossary.

Being myself a compulsive collector of “beautiful books” and a botanical illustrator, I can only recommend this work which will delight any lover of beautiful books.

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