

Louise Bradley – Roots And Seeds

Louise Bradley’s vibrant, colourful and linear work explores plants and flowers as universally accessible themes representing historical, biological and personal stories.

The plants and flowers in Bradley’s flag designs are found in our parkland, or feature on fabrics, furniture and ceramics in the collection. Shapes of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century pattern pieces used to make women’s clothing represent the stories of our Museum’s founder, Joséphine Bowes, and expert botanist Mary Eleanor Bowes.

Joséphine’s love of trees and botanicals is well documented, represented here by Bradley’s use of evergreens and roses. Both were planted at Streatlam Castle, the home Joséphine shared with her husband, John.

Exotic flowers, protea, iris and pelargonium bloom across the artworks. They were among the botanical specimens brought back from the Fynbos region of South Africa by William Paterson, who was commissioned by Mary Eleanor, between 1777 and 1779. They were placed in a specially-made cabinet.

In 2004, the “Cape Floral Region Protected Areas” were inscribed as a World Heritage Site. The Fynbos shrubland vegetation is experiencing one of the most rapid rates of extinction in the world, highlighting the privilege exercised by Mary Eleanor in asking for plants to be removed from their habitats, and the precariousness of the planet’s climate and biodiversity.

