

Maria Sibylla Merian

Entomologist and Author

In her 14 years in Nuremberg she evolved not only into a flower painter but also into a passionate observer of insects. She dedicated the rest of her life to the study of the life cycle of butterflies, bees, beetles, flies and many other insects.

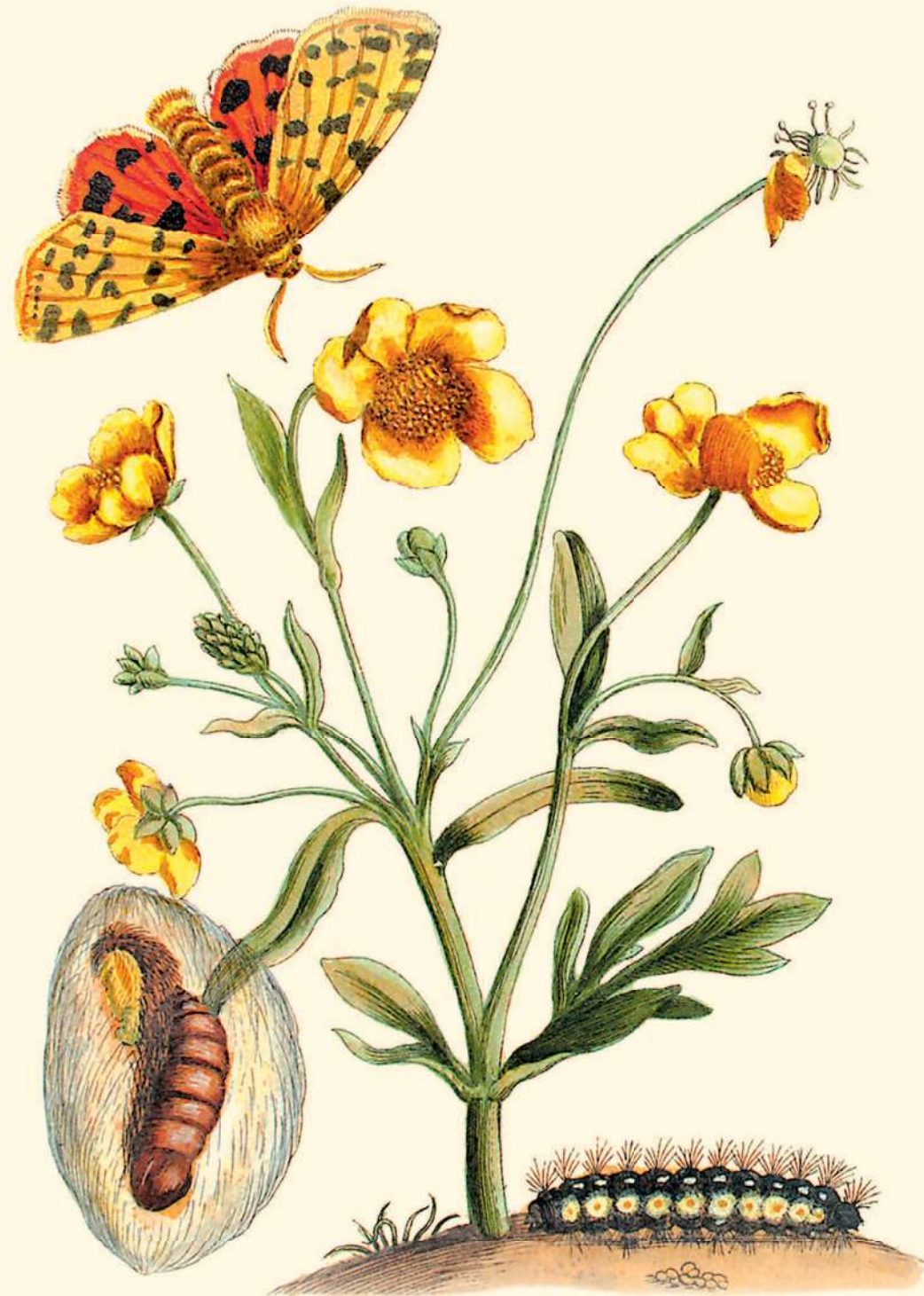


Caterpillars and their Host Plants

She drew and described the metamorphosis of these “Thierlein” (little creatures) from the egg into the caterpillar into the pupa into the insect that hatches from the caterpillar cocoon. In a new type of image she showed this process together with the special host and food plants vital to the caterpillars.

Two new types of book were printed, each with 51 copper etchings and texts. Title: “The Caterpillars’ Miraculous Transformation and Peculiar Flower Food“, Part I (1679) and Part II (1683).

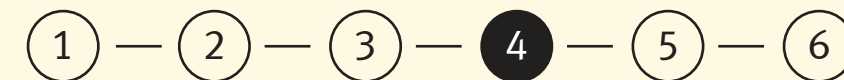
On the title page Merian not only addressed “garden lovers“ and other laymen, but also wanted to be “at the service of nature experts and art painters“, i.e., also to serve the (male) experts of her time.



Copperplate etching 6 in Merian’s first Caterpillar Book: *Sweet buttercup* | *Ranunculus dulcis*. For Merian, her little summer birds (“Sommervögelein”, now day-flying butterflies) and her moths (“Motten”, now night-flying moths) did not yet have their own names. Today, the moth depicted here is called the *Purple Tiger Moth* and in international research *Diacrisia purpurata*.



Merian Riverside Walk



Please follow the butterflies in the pavement as guides to your route.

