

## Plate 11 and Plate 18 from "Dissertation in Insect Generations and Metamorphosis in Surinam"



## Plate 11 and Plate 18 from “Dissertation in Insect Generations and Metamorphosis in Surinam,” 1719

### A Bug's Life

**Maria Sibylla Merian (1647–1717)** devoted herself to observing creatures in their natural habitats. At 52, she embarked for Suriname, a Dutch colony in South America. For two years, she recorded flora and fauna populating its gardens, fields, and formidable rainforest.

### Take a closer look

These engravings created from Merian's watercolors portray insects and arachnids arrayed on their host plants. Teeming with color, texture, pattern, and minute details, the images marry science and art. Her groundbreaking publication warranted several posthumous editions.

### Who knew?

Merian's depictions of metamorphosis helped debunk the belief that bugs generated spontaneously: flies from rotting meat, moths from wool. Before seeing evidence of insects' developmental stages—egg, larva, pupa, and adult—people did not perceive the link between caterpillar and butterfly.

Maria Sibylla Merian, *Plate 11 and Plate 18 from Dissertation in Insect Generations and Metamorphosis in Surinam*, second edition, 1719; Hand-colored engravings on paper, Both: 20½ x 14½ inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gifts of Wallace and Wilhelmina Holladay; Photographs by Lee Stalsworth

