

**PRESERVING SCIENTIFIC ILLUSTRATION OR INVALUABLE ART?
THE HISTORY OF TROPICAL FISH DRAWINGS BY
JACQUES BURKHARDT, LOUIS AGASSIZ'S PERSONAL ARTIST**

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The Archives of the Museum of Comparative Zoology have been fully incorporated into the Library's Special Collections since 1978. This was a logical step during the period of extensive Library reorganization and renovation. The Archives need both adequate security and proper environment. Included in the Archives were numerous boxes and journals of scientific illustrations which were produced by artists employed by the Museum and personally by Louis Agassiz, the founder and first director. Jacques Burkhardt came from Europe as a "personal artist" to Louis Agassiz and spent most of his career years next to the naturalist, "drawing from life". He traveled with Agassiz during the Thayer expedition to Brazil in 1865. Approximately 947 drawings of different tropical fish resulted from that expedition. Burkhardt died in 1867. Over decades serious scientific work was planned based on drawings and specimens which were brought over during the expedition. As other ambitious projects always took precedence with Agassiz, these projects were shifted aside. After his death several of his successors tried to continue with the projects involving these drawings and sought funds, but none of these efforts ever materialized. In 1940, not realizing the historic and artistic value of these drawings, the Director of the Museum sent them away to a friend, an ichthyologist. In the late seventies and eighties, when the Archives were organized, we became aware of them "missing" and inquiries were placed to the ichthyological community.

Six months later, a large box arrived from an anonymous sender addressed to the Director of the MCZ. It contained the 947 drawings, untouched, with the original note from Barbour written in 1940. Since then we have submitted several grant proposals for their preservation and identification. The fact that Jacques Burkhardt remained virtually unknown negatively influenced funding decisions. These drawings, if evaluated, preserved and displayed, may eventually establish Jacques Burkhardt as a significant artist of the 19th century. A traveling exhibit, planned by the Brazilian Art Museum in Sao Paulo for 1994/1995 will include some of these drawings and hopefully give Jacques Burkhardt a recognition in the artistic world.