

Peer into the hidden realms of microscopic life in this rare scientific classic

Robert Hooke, *Micrographia*. London: Jo. Martyn and Ja. Allestry, 1665. 11 9/16 inches x 7 3/4 inches (294 x 197 mm), 436 pages.

Robert Hooke was still in his twenties when he wrote *Micrographia*, yet in this single volume he revealed the immense potential of a new instrument, the microscope, and the many brilliant speculations of a multifaceted mind. *Micrographia* introduces us to the living cell; to microscopic fungi and the life story of the mosquito; we encounter the two contrasting theories about the origin of the lunar craters posed for the very first time. We read the first sensible proposal for the origin of fossils, and an uncanny prediction of the artificial fiber industry in Hooke's discussion of the spinning of silk by the spider. Elsewhere in his great book, gigantic insects populate the pages, and controversy and scientific argument mark out the text.

This magnificently illustrated book represents a turning point in the scientific understanding of the structure of life forms. The biological use of the term "cell" was introduced by Hooke to signify the microscopic structure of a section of cork. His study showed clearly that solid cork is made up of tiny boxes, explaining its well-known properties: that it is highly compressible, resists becoming saturated with water, and is exceedingly light. In this way, Robert Hooke used the microscope to explain the physical properties of a familiar substance.

The first edition of *Micrographia* is a large book, measuring almost twelve inches tall and weighing three pounds. It was printed in October 1664, and when bound copies appeared on sale the following year it became an instant best-seller. The diarist Samuel Pepys wrote that he liked *Micrographia* better than any other book he had bought, and sat up half the night reading its revelations. One can marvel at the clarity of the prose and the vividness of the pictures; many of the plates (like that of the stinging nettle, for example, and the louse) reveal minute details not seen again until the era of the scanning electron microscope.

This is a beautiful copy from the Warnock Library with a binding of contemporary full dark brown calfskin over pasteboard. The spine has been re-backed with leather of similar color and weight as the original material. The boards have blind rules on the four edges and blind arabesque decorations in the ruled corners. The spine, divided into six panels, has original spine pieces on top of the re-backing leather. Gilt title on red leather in one panel, the panel below with the emblem of the Earl of Middlesex; other panels tooled with gilt designs. A modern solander box houses the book. The box is constructed of quarter black morocco with black cloth; its spine is divided into six panels with gilt tooling of the title and band areas.

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