



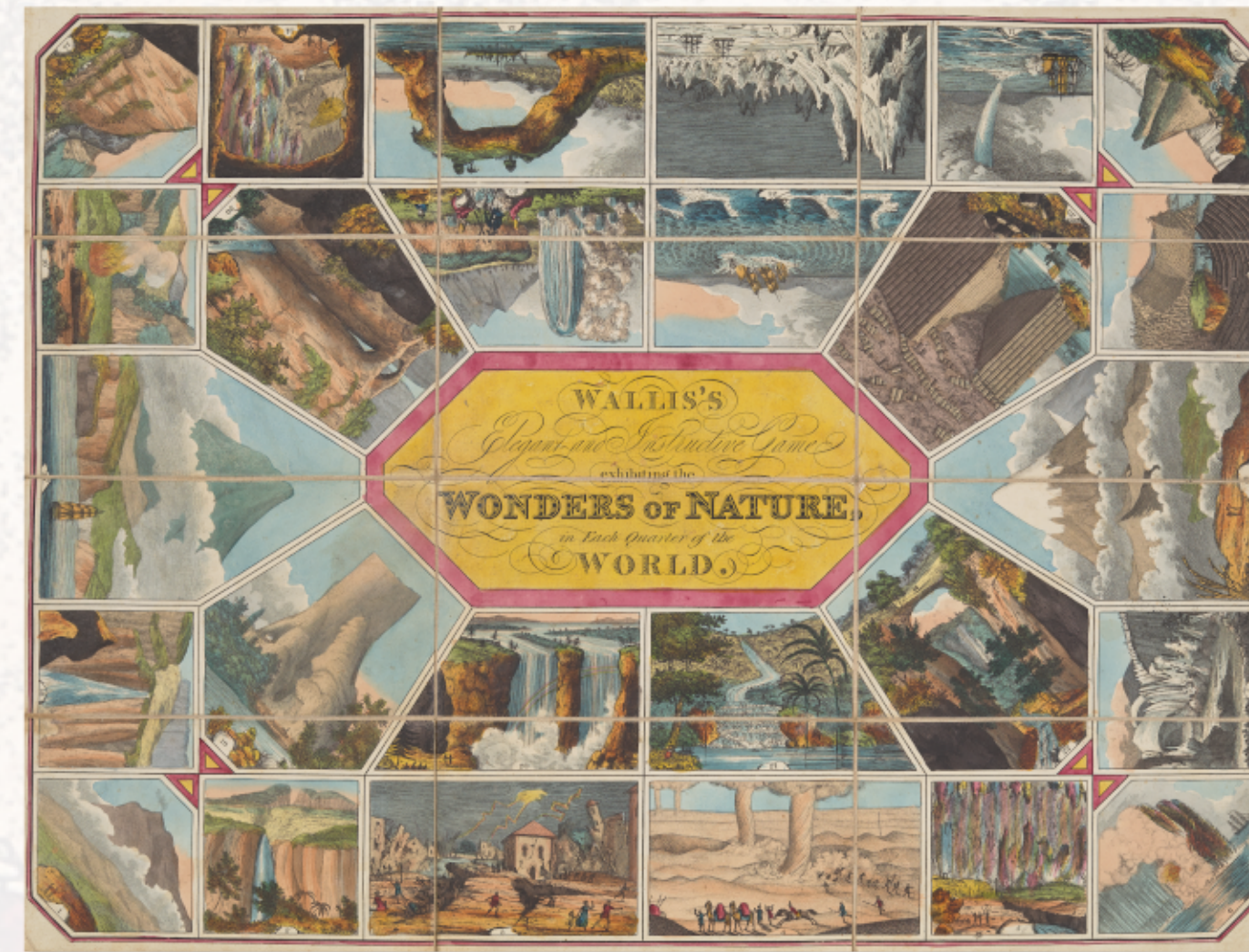
A Bear Plunging into the Sea. Engraving from a drawing by John Ross in *A voyage of discovery* by John Ross (1819)  
Special Collection Oversize, G650.E18ROS

## Polar Opposites

Traditionally, exploration beyond Europe was reserved for a very small, elite group of gentlemen. During the Romantic period there was a falling away of physical and geographical boundaries previously thought insurmountable. Travellers explored unfamiliar territories, often remote from Britain, in the course of expeditions such as the early nineteenth-century voyages to the Arctic regions.

The landscapes, flora and fauna, and peoples of these new destinations captured travellers' imaginations and became the subject of many works of art, cartography, literature, and even board games. Representations of landscapes as polarised as the arctic and the desert were brought into the homes of British people.

These works of art and literature recorded depictions of unfamiliar landscapes, animals, and peoples, of so inconceivable a nature that they blurred the distinctions between the real and the imaginary. Even for those who explored these new lands, what they saw with their own eyes would have seemed fantastical, from crimson cliffs of ice to marsupials standing on two legs.



*Wallis's elegant and instructive game exhibiting the wonders of nature, in each quarter of the world* (1818)  
Willughby Games Collection, Game x-14



Illustration in *The naturalist's library, Volume 24, Mammalia, thick-skinned quadrupeds* edited by Sir William Jardine (1843)  
Special Collection, QL703NAT