

Press release

Filter #7: Photosynthetic

Special issue on photography and botany delivers a rare insight into a neglected niche of photography

Plants have been a popular theme ever since the birth of photography. Photo pioneers such as Thomas Wedgwood, Hippolyte Bayard, Henry Fox Talbot and Louis Daguerre all experimented with making lasting images of plants, and from the very beginning, the photographic medium was associated with its ability to depict nature. Botanical photographs have had an immense impact on our knowledge and perception of nature and plants through photographic herbaria, illustrations in biology books and scientific journals, and have been a cherished motif in the arts, in photographic competitions and on social media.

The latest issue of the photo journal *Filter* focuses on the interplay between photography and botany from the 1840s until today. For the photographic pioneers there was a fundamental correspondence between photography's use of light and chemicals to create images and the photosynthetic process of plants, in which sunlight is transformed into chemical energy and thereby oxygen. Today, the direct impact of the (natural) photographic material – light, chemistry, paper – has been replaced with digital technology and our relationship with nature has radically changed.

With written contributions from international researchers, photo historians and curators such as Wade Davis, Stefano Mancuso, Carol Armstrong and Esther Ruelfs, *Photosynthetic* delivers insight into this neglected niche of photography. The journal presents articles on the close connection between amateur botanists and photo pioneers of the Victorian age, the interchange between plant photography, crafts and modern art at the beginning of the 20th century, plant intelligence, ethno-botanical studies of the Amazonas and botanical micro-photography. It also features seminal historical imagery by Anna Atkins, Karl Blossfeldt and Wilhelm Weimar, as well as portfolios by contemporary artists including Andreas Greiner, Macoto Murayama, Diana Scherer, Helene Schmitz, Heidi Specker and Henrik Spohler.

Photosynthetic not only shows how the photographic medium has had a strong impact on our understanding of nature throughout the past 180 years, but also how botanical photographs have influenced the arts. At the same time, the publication illustrates how plant photography has gained renewed relevance for contemporary artists dealing with urgent societal issues such as pollution, climate change, genetic engineering and monoculture.



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Portfolios: Delphine Bedel, Marianne Engberg, Andreas Greiner, Derek Jarman, Macoto Murayama, Diana Scherer, Helene Schmitz, Howard Sooley, Heidi Specker, Henrik Spohler and Rachel Sussmann

Essays by: Carol Armstrong, Wade Davis, Stefano Mancuso, Gert Mattenklott, Esther Ruelfs, Sandra Santos and Annika Sellmann

The journal is sold through selected bookstores and exhibition spaces, including Fotografisk Center, Copenhagen, Walter König Buchhandlung, Berlin, and online at www.filterforfotografi.net

Contact and press images:

kontakt@filterforfotografi.net

Ph: +49 17672687925

About Filter

Established in 2007, Filter constitutes a platform for exploring the role of photography in visual culture. The journal presents various types of photography – art, documentary, amateur photography as well as scientific and social uses of the medium – and includes both contemporary photography and historical material. Each issue is centered on a theme. Themes so far are Photogenic, Space, Normal, Disappearances, Hybrid and Nordic Now! www.filterforfotografi.net