

# Models



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## THE FRAGRANCE OF MODELS SWAYING IN THE BREEZE

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The first book in history illustrated with photographic images is about plants. *Photographs of British Algae: Cyanotype Impressions*, published in October 1841, contains a series of pictures taken by English photographer Anna Atkins. In fact, the earliest photographic book ever made is the work of a botanist who had learned the revolutionary processes of photogenic drawing and calotype directly from their inventor, William Fox Talbot. Shortly afterwards, another family friend, the John Herschels, taught Anna Atkins the technique of the cyanotype, with which Atkins created all the images in her groundbreaking book by placing a series of wet algae samples directly onto sheets of sensitive paper and exposing them to light. In a perfect balance between art and science, the book not only documents the main characteristics of these exquisite marine plants, but also shows them arranged in such a way as to make them appear as elegant and unusual as possible. In keeping with Victorian sensibilities, Anna Atkins's seaweeds are a blend of taxonomy and harmony.

Since that time, there have been countless great photographers dedicated to depicting plants and flowers. Not only that: many of them, like Atkins, see these plants as true living sculptures, exploiting the filter of photographic representation in order to crystallize this interpretation. Charles Keen, a gardener at some of England's most prestigious estates in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, took a series of photographs during the same period in which the flowers and fruit of the plants he tended appear to be covered with a thick shell, resulting from a process of casting metal. Ogawa Kazumasa hand-colored dozens of photographs which he published in the book *Some Japanese Flowers* (1861), thus suspending his subjects between nature and craft. Edward Steichen opened a firm where he cultivated Delphinium flowers which he selected and photographed placing emphasis on their slender form, reminiscent of Greek columns. These were exhibited at MoMA in 1926, forming the museum's first and only exhibition devoted exclusively to living plants. In the photographs of Edward Weston and Anselm Cunningham, both members of the f/64 Group, the fragile instability of the plants is transformed into monumental robustness through the use of sharp light. In Karl Blossfeldt's works, plant forms lack the details of Art Nouveau objects, while in Robert Mapplethorpe's they reproduce the essence of classical art.

Despite the distance that separates them, photography is thus a privileged tool for tracing, observing and studying the links between the natural world and that of objects. This is also the case in Mitsu Rejzner's work, with the difference that Rejzner carries out an operation diametrically opposed to the previous ones. Instead of showing the miracle of a nature that seems to be inspired by the genius of an artist, his images emphasize nature's ability to reproduce nature. From an involuntary process (nature is obviously inspired by nothing, but we are always dealing with human intervention) to a carefully planned action, from biology to representation.

The title says it all: *Models*. Mitsu Rejzner doesn't photograph flowers and plants, but their models. The latter are reproductions made by hand copied from Germany at the beginning of the twentieth century and imported by the Faculty of Biology at the "Mendes Lévy Case" University in Luján for educational purposes. Like works of art, therefore, photographs of other representations. Reproductions of representations. They set off a spiral that immediately conveys a sense of vertigo. For it is as if Rejzner is

observing himself and his own language. Like the photographs, the models tend towards maximum stability. Models in an operation of dissection of the subjects placed in front of the lens and of their representation itself.

The artistic capacity of Rejzner's work concerns not only his technical skills, but his relationship with the history of photography in general. Models come together and mingle with what was before them. Rejzner has a thorough knowledge of the past of his medium as form of artistic expression, and this becomes another theme of his project. Indeed, there are several elements of continuity that bring these images closer to those made by Jones, Keenness, Heister, Weston, Cunningham, Blossfeldt, Mapplethorpe and many others.

First of all, it is the heightened attention to detail. You can see everything in these photographs, or at least that is what they're aiming for. Hyper-realism. The photographic apparatus exceeds the capabilities of human eye. Accuracy is maintained, art and technology merge. It is a matter of proximity: we are so close to the subjects that the visual experience is accompanied by a tactile sensation you almost feel you are touching them.

Secondly, there is the large size of the representation: in most cases, the subjects of these images are enlarged compared to their natural size. It is a kind of reversal of the previous point (from the infinitesimal scale of detail to the hypertrophy of representation), just like the scale ratio that normally exists between the real world and its photographic image. If photography generally consists in a powerful tool for miniaturizing reality, which can thus be compressed into a frame (or a digital screen), here, on the contrary, it functions as a magnifying glass. This is particularly true of Rejzner's work, which takes these already very enlarged models of plants and flowers (made in this way to facilitate their study and enlarge their size further, until they become actual sculptures). The delivery of nature suddenly becomes an unsettling threat.

Finally, Mitsu Rejzner borrows from the works of the past the same attention to composition. The reference is to the whole tradition of still life, which has always attributed great value to the formal aspects of representation. As a matter of fact, the basic principle of this genre consists precisely in representing nature (or other objects) not so much as it is (or as they are found), but after it has been rearranged and prepared in relation to a point of view. It is a matter of control. The actual space surrounding the subjects, often inside the photographer's studio, emphasizes this detachment. Then something derives happens, flowers and plants lose their vitality in favour of the immortality of their image. This is the consequence of any photographic process. Movement stops and the subject freezes. Fragility gives way to rigidity, non-definiteness, rigour. The present becomes the past. But this is not the case with Rejzner's work. We know that his subjects are not flower-and-plant, but a series of plastic and paper scale models. In the unfolding of his process of overwriting, photography animates them. Once photographed, these objects seem even more real than the models they represent. It triggers a paradoxical with-drawn into reality. Instead of proclaiming the end of what it represents, photography creates it. Reflecting on reliability, Rejzner's work takes us back to the origin as we observe them through the filter of these photographs: we imagine the fragance of the models as they gently sway across a field, in the breeze.



10

Модель 2

Модель 1000



11

Модель 2

Модель 1000



52 Model 2019 *Wolffia carinata* L. Parade/Wort



53 Model 2019 *Wolffia carinata* L.



Mobot\_01 Simple radial-type inflorescence pattern



Cycas  
1. perianth lobes  
2. strobili (spines)