

Art forms in nature : examples from the plant world photographed direct from nature / by Professor Karl Blossfeldt; with an introduction by Karl Nierendorf.

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ART FORMS IN NATURE



AQ, AI (folios)



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ART FORMS IN NATURE

EXAMPLES FROM THE PLANT WORLD
PHOTOGRAPHED DIRECT FROM NATURE

BY

PROFESSOR KARL BLOSSFELDT

WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY KARL NIERENDORF

LONDON: A. ZWEMMER

CHARING CROSS ROAD

1929

fallen

AQ AI
(Folios)



ART FORMS IN NATURE.

ART AND NATURE, the two great manifestations in the world surrounding us, are so intimately related to one another that it is impossible to think of one without the other, and thus we can never compress them into a formula representing one idea. Infinitely multifarious as the realm of the crystalline, animal and vegetable forms which grow and perish with us may be, they are governed by a rigid and eternal law emanating from beyond this earth, and obey the profoundly mysterious Fiat of creation that called them into existence. For thousands of years every form in Nature has been a constant repetition of the same process, subject only to alterations due to climatic changes or the varying character of the soil, which do not interfere with their original shape. The fern and the horsetail already had their present form in inconceivably remote ages. Their size alone has undergone alterations through the development of the atmosphere of this planet.

It is the result of the creative act that distinguishes the works of Art from those of Nature, namely, the modelling of an original form, newly produced, and not the imitated or repeated form. Art has its immediate origin in the latest powerful incentive existing at the time, the most visible expression of which it is. In the same way that time has no part in the existence of a blade of grass which, being a symbol of everlasting primeval laws governing all life, appears monumental and worthy of veneration, so a work of Art has an overwhelmingly moving effect through its very uniqueness as the most concentrated manifestation, as an arc of light joining the two poles of the Past and the Future. From the Assyrian temple to the stadium of the present day, from the Buddha absorbed in meditation to The Thinker of

Rodin, from the Chinese coloured wood-engraving to the modern copper-plate, everything created by man records the spirit of his epoch with such distinctiveness that it is easy to deduce from it the actual date of the creation. In the artistic production of every generation its relation to Nature, as well as to God and the science of mathematics, is revealed as in an open book. And the more securely the actual present is enshrined in a work the greater will be its value for eternity.

If man in the space of thousands of years would produce the same style of architecture and the same form of Art without variation, his creations would resemble the structures erected by bees and ants—merely products of Nature founded on parallel lines with the complicated nests of many birds, the web of a spider and the shell of a snail. But what exalts man above the other creatures is his capability of transformation by aid of his own spiritual force, which gave the Catholic of the Middle Ages and his entire world a totally different idea of building than, for instance, the Greek of classical times. As Nature, in its endless monotony of origin and decay, is the embodiment of a profoundly sublime secret, so Art is an equally incomprehensible second creation, emanating organically from the human heart and the human brain; a creation which from the very beginning of time and throughout the ages has had its origin in the yearning for perpetuity, for eternity, and in the desire to retain the spiritual face of its generation—doomed to be engulfed in the whirlpool of time—in stone, bronze, wood and painted forms that are independent of birth and death.

This may be said of mankind of the present day, as well as of any other period. We are witnesses of the fact that modern youth is rising up in revolt against merciless materialism and intellectualism, dictated by the rapid

progress of our time, and is returning to Nature with elemental vigour. Sport, a powerful manifestation common to every country on earth, here provides the necessary compensation. A new type of man appears—a free being, rejoicing in healthy exercise, intimately acquainted with the elements air and water, tanned by the sun, and resolved to open out for himself a new and brighter world. The blessed and health-giving powers of light, air and sunshine are fully recognised by him. His chief aim is the penetration of his body by the rays of the sun, the illumination of his whole being, and the transformation of all the various phases of life; in other words, he aims at active and immediate union with Nature. Simultaneously, a new form of architecture supersedes the dark stone caverns and opens out wide vistas by means of light walls of glass and actually brings the house and the garden together, the fantastic wealth of variety in the latter being made possible by the production of new species of flowers and their scientific cultivation. And, again, beyond the garden, the motor-car annihilates space between the town and the country.

With the aid of slow motion and rapid projection we can study in films the expansion and contraction, the breathing and the growth of plants. The microscope reveals systems of worlds in a single drop of water, and the instruments of the astronomical observatory enable us to explore the infinite depths of the universe. Modern technics bring us into closer touch with Nature than was ever possible before, and with the aid of scientific appliances we obtain glimpses into worlds which hitherto had been hidden from our senses. And it is technics also that provide us with new tools for artistic moulding. Although the expression, "The battles of the spirit are fought out on canvas," was justified in the 19th century, the highest Art

of which was its paintings, to-day the fight is waged with iron, concrete, steel, and so forth, and with the waves of light and ether. Our architecture, mechanical buildings, motor-cars, aeroplanes, as well as the film, the radio and photography, embrace possibilities of a high artistic order, and a thousand signs indicate that the triumph of technics, so often deplored, is not the victory of matter but the creative spirit manifesting itself in new forms. Thus, it is not by chance that a work is published now, which, with the aid of the photographic camera, by giving enlargements of certain parts of a plant, reveals the relationship existing between Art and Nature, never heretofore represented with such startling clearness. Professor Blossfeldt, architect and teacher at the United State Schools of Free and Applied Art in Berlin, in hundreds of photographic pictures of plants, which have not been retouched or artificially manipulated, but solely enlarged in different degrees, has demonstrated the close connection between the form produced by man and that developed by Nature.

The following selection comprises 120 Plates from this rich material, and each reveals the unity of the Creative Will in Nature and in Art, proving this to be a fact by the positive evidence of the photographic plate and, therefore, all the more convincing. And as it was a person of eminence who recognised this fact as being his own peculiar task to develop and, consequently, adopted it as the aim of his life, there is unfolded to the artist who approaches Nature with the aid of the eye of the camera a world comprising all forms of past styles, from dramatic tension to austere repose, and even to the expression of lyrical and the most profound inspiration. The fickle delicacy of a Rococo ornament, as well as the heroic severity of a Renaissance chandelier, the mystically entangled tendrils of the Gothic flamboyant

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style, noble shafts of columns, cupolas and towers of exotic architecture, gilded episcopal crosiers, wrought-iron railings, precious sceptres, all these shapes and forms trace their original design to the plant world. Even the dance—a human body grown to art—finds its prototype in a bud, with its touchingly innocent movement and its expression of the purest psychic effort, a dream apparition descending from the realm of visions into the flowery regions of our terrestrial world. The picture of this small germinating sprout (Pl. 96) bears witness with clear distinctness of the unity of the living and the moulded form. The dance, restricted to the ephemeral occurrence of the event in Nature, only becomes Art by the repetition of motion as represented by the body, according to fixed rule and in strictly defined measures. It is called upon to wrest from the flood of development that movement to which it cannot bestow permanence, except by constant repetition; and whilst the bud of a plant continues to adopt that everlasting form which becomes for us the type of an animated body, in order later on to unfold itself, the dance perpetuates the psychic expression and thereby advances it to the time-accomplished atmosphere of Art.

Manifold are the phases of life and manifold, also, are the transformations undergone by man. Elevating in its joyousness, far beyond the aesthetic sensation, is the recognition that the hidden creative forces, to the fluctuations of which we, as beings created by Nature, are subject, are ruling everywhere with the same impartiality and authority in the works produced by each generation as a type of its existence, as well as in the most perishable and most delicate creations of Nature.

If the copperplate engravings in this work demonstrate distinctly for the first time the relations which become evident with increasing clearness,

in the minute as well as in the great, they will contribute, on their part, to further the most important task that lies before us to-day, namely, to grasp the deeper meaning of our present time, which is striving for the recognition and realisation of a new unity in all spheres of Life, of Art and of Technics.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PLATES.

- 1 *Equisetum hiemale*. Winter Horsetail. A young shoot enlarged 25 times.
- 2 a *Equisetum hiemale*. Winter Horsetail: enlarged 12 times.
b *Equisetum maximum*. Fox-tailed Asparagus: enlarged 4 times.
c *Equisetum hiemale*. Winter Horsetail: enlarged 18 times.
- 3 *Equisetum hiemale*. Winter Horsetail: enlarged 12 times.
- 4 *Equisetum hiemale*. Winter Horsetail. Section of a stem enlarged 30 times.
- 5 *Equisetum hiemale*. Winter Horsetail. Part of a root enlarged 8 times.
- 6 a *Equisetum hiemale*. Winter Horsetail: enlarged 8 times.
b *Equisetum arvense*. Bottle-brush, False Horsetail. Fruit enlarged 12 times.
- 7 a *Equisetum hiemale*. Winter Horsetail: enlarged 12 times.
b *Hosta japonica*. Savannah-wood. Young shoot enlarged 4 times.
c *Equisetum hiemale*. Winter Horsetail: enlarged 12 times.
- 8 a *Equisetum hiemale*. Winter Horsetail: enlarged 10 times.
b *Rhamnus purshiana*. Californian Bear-berry. Young shoot enlarged 25 times.
c *Equisetum hiemale*. Winter Horsetail: enlarged 10 times.
- 9 a *Callicarpa dichotoma*: enlarged 7 times.
b *Fraxinus ornus*. Flowering Ash. Shoot enlarged 6 times.
c *Cornus pubescens*. Dogwood: enlarged 8 times.
- 10 a *Cornus brachypoda*. Dogwood. Shoot enlarged 12 times.
b *Cornus pubescens*. Dogwood. Leaf-bud enlarged 15 times.
c *Viburnum*. Guelder Rose, Snowball Tree. Leaf-bud enlarged 8 times.
- 11 *Callistemma brachiatum*. Seed of a Scabious enlarged 30 times.
- 12 *Geum rivale*. Drooping Avens. Flower-bud, with the sepals removed, enlarged 25 times.
- 13 *Aesculus parviflora*. Small-flowered (American) Horse-chestnut. Young shoots enlarged 12 times.
- 14 *Acer*. Stems and shoot of different varieties of the Maple-tree enlarged 10 times.

- 15 Small parts of a branch of the Dogwood:
a Cornus nuttallii: enlarged 12 times.
b Cornus nuttallii: enlarged 8 times.
c Cornus florida.. Box-wood of N. America, Flowering Dogwood: enlarged 25 times.
- 16 *a Cornus nuttallii*. End of a branch, enlarged 8 times.
b Cornus nuttallii. Branch of Dogwood, enlarged 8 times.
c Acer. Maple-tree. Stem, enlarged 8 times.
- 17 *a Cornus nuttallii*. Dogwood. End of a branch enlarged 6 times.
b Cornus florida. Box-wood of N. America, Flowering Dogwood. End of branch enlarged 6 times.
c Acer pennsylvanicum. Maple tree. End of a branch enlarged 6 times.
- 18 *Cornus florida*. Box-wood of N. America, Flowering Dogwood. Shoots enlarged 5 times.
- 19 *Impatiens glanduligera*. Hardy Indian Balsam. Stem with ramifications: natural size.
- 20 *a Cornus nuttallii*. Dogwood. Young shoot enlarged 5 times.
b Cornus officinalis. Common Dogwood. Ramifications enlarged 8 times.
- 21 *Picea excelsa*. Silver Fir, or red variety. Young shoots, with the needles removed, enlarged 10 times.
- 22 *Acer rufinerve*. Maple-tree. Shoots enlarged 10 times.
- 23 *Primula japonica*. Japanese primrose. Fruit enlarged 6 times.
- 24 *Physostegia virginiana*. Virginian False Dragon-head. Stem, with calix and caulinary leaves, enlarged 15 times.
- 25 *Aristolochia clematitis*. Upright Birth-wort. Flowers enlarged 7 times.
- 26 *Cucurbita*. Stems of a Pumpkin enlarged 5 times.
- 27 *Cajophora lateritia*, *Loasaceae*. Common Chili Nettle. Seminal capsules enlarged 5 times.
- 28 *a Cassiope tetragona*. A variety of heather enlarged 12 times.
b Chrysanthemum leucanthemum. Ox-eye Daisy. Flower-bud enlarged 16 times.
c Same as *a*.
- 29 *Thujaopsis dolabrata*. Hatchet-leaved Arbor Vitae. Ends of a branch enlarged 10 times.
- 30 *Saxifraga aizoon*. Margined Pyramidal Saxifrage. Leaf-rosette enlarged 8 times.

- 31 *Aconitum anthora*. Jacquin's Yellow-flowered Monk's-hood. Leaf enlarged 5 times.
- 32 *Eryngium bourgatii*. Bourgati's Eryngo. Leaf enlarged 5 times.
- 33 *a Polypodiaceae aspidieae*. Polypody. Rolled-up frond enlarged 4 times.
b Vaccinium corymbosum. Common or Swamp Blueberry. Bunch of fruit enlarged 8 times.
c Polystichum falcatum. Prickly Shield-fern. Young rolled-up frond enlarged 5 times.
- 34 *a Polypodium vulgare*. Common Polypody, Adder's Fern. Young frond enlarged 7 times.
b Ribes nigrum. Common Black Currant. Raceme enlarged 5 times.
c Pteridium aquilinum. Bracken. Young frond enlarged 5 times.
- 35 *Saxifraga willkommiana*. Willkomm's Saxifrage. Leaf enlarged 18 times.
- 36 *Scolopendrium vulgare*. Hart's-tongue Fern. Young rolled-up fronds enlarged 6 times.
- 37 *Achillea umbellata*. Milfoil or Yarrow. Leaf enlarged 50 times.
- 38 *Polystichum munitum*. Prickly Shield-fern. Young rolled-up frond enlarged 6 times.
- 39 *Verbena canadensis*. Canadian Vervain. Leaf enlarged 10 times.
- 40 *Silphium laciniatum*. Compass-plant. Part of a leaf dried on the stem enlarged 6 times.
- 41 *Silphium laciniatum*. Compass-plant. Leaf dried on the stem enlarged 5 times.
- 42 *Trollius europaeus*. Common Globe-flower, Golden-ball, Troll-flower. Leaf dried on the stem enlarged 5 times.
- 43 *Delphinium*. Larkspur. Part of a dried leaf enlarged 6 times.
- 44 *Dipsacus laciniatus*. "Venus's Bason", Teasel, Thistle, Fuller's Teasel. Leaves dried on the stem enlarged 4 times.
- 45 *Delphinium*. Larkspur. Parts of a leaf dried on the stem enlarged 6 times.
- 46 *Struthiopteris germanica*. German Ostrich-fern. Young rolled-up frond enlarged 8 times.
- 47 *Saxifraga willkommiana*. Willkomm's Saxifrage. Leaf-rosette enlarged 8 times.

- 48 *a Stachis grandiflora.* Large-flowered Hedge-nettle or Wound-wort: enlarged 5 times.
b Nicotiana rustica. Latakia Tobacco-plant or Indian Tobacco-plant. Stem: natural size.
- 49 *Bryonia alba.* White Bryony. Leaf with tendril enlarged 4 times.
- 50 *Chrysanthemum parthenium.* Feverfew chrysanthemum. Leaf enlarged 5 times.
- 51 *Macleya cordata.* Celandine Tree, belonging to the family of the papaveraceae. Young shoot enlarged 5 times.
- 52 *Ptelea trifoliata.* Yellow-leaved Hop-tree, Shrubby Trefoil. Branch with fruit enlarged 6 times.
- 53 *Cucurbita.* Tendrils of the Pumpkin enlarged 4 times.
- 54 *Adiantum pedatum.* American Maiden-hair Fern. Young rolled-up fronds enlarged 8 and 12 times.
- 55 *Adiantum pedatum.* American Maiden-hair Fern. Young rolled-up fronds enlarged 8 times.
- 56 *Aspidium filix mas.* Shield-fern. Young rolled-up fronds enlarged 4 times.
- 57 *Forsythia suspensa.* Japanese Golden-ball Tree. Young shoot enlarged 10 times.
- 58 *Aristolochia clematitis.* Upright Birth-wort. Young shoot enlarged 5 times.
- 59 *a Aristolochia clematitis.* Upright Birth-wort. Stem with leaf enlarged 8 times.
b Hyoscyamus niger. Common Henbane. Seminal capsule enlarged 10 times.
c Same as *a*.
- 60 *Petasites officinalis.* Batter-Dock, Bog Rhubarb, Butter-bur. Glome enlarged 5 times.
- 61 *Salvia argentea.* Silver-leaved Sage. Part of a flowering plant enlarged 4 times.
- 62 *Salvia argentea.* Silver-leaved Sage. Inflorescence enlarged 6 times.
- 63 *Abutilon.* Lime-Mallow. Seminal-capsule enlarged 12 times.
- 64 *Michauxia campanuloides.* Michaux's Bell-flower. Bud enlarged 8 times.
- 65 *Salvia aethiopis.* Abyssinian Sage: enlarged 4 times.
- 66 *Eryngium giganteum.* Giant Eryngo. Flower, with involucres, enlarged 4 times.

- 67 *a Thujopsis dolabrata*. Hatchet-leaved Arbor Vitae. End of branch enlarged 10 times.
b Ruta graveolens. Common Rue. Flower enlarged 8 times.
c Same as *a*.
- 68 *Parnassia palustris*. Common Grass-of-Parnassus. Inner parts of the flower, with the outer petals removed, enlarged 25 times.
- 69 *Asclepias speciosa*. Milkweed. Flower enlarged 10 times.
- 70 *a & c Thujopsis dolabrata*. Hatchet-leaved Arbor Vitae. Ends of branches enlarged 10 times.
b Solanum tuberosum. Flower of the Potato-plant enlarged 5 times.
- 71 *a Sanguisorba canadensis*. Canadian Great Burnet. Stem with stipula enlarged 8 times.
b Vincetoxicum fuscatum. Tame Poison. Lower stem with young leaves enlarged 15 times.
- 72 *Epimedium muschianum*. Muschi's Barren-wort. Flower enlarged 24 times.
- 73 *Cobea scandens*. Mexican Ivy-plant, Cups-and-Saucers. Flower-bud enlarged 4 times.
- 74 *Cobea scandens*. Mexican Ivy-plant, Cups-and-Saucers. Calix enlarged 4 times.
- 75 *Taraxacum officinalis*. Dandelion, Priest's Crown, Swine's-snout. Flower-bud enlarged 8 times.
- 76 *Eranthis cilicia*. Winter Aconite, Hellebore, Wolf's-bane. Fruit, with involucre, enlarged 8 times.
- 77 *Cephalaria*. Small Teasel. Glome enlarged 10 times.
- 78 *a Tragopogon porrifolius*. Salsify, Jerusalem Star, Vegetable-Oyster. Flower-bud enlarged 4 times.
b Muscari racemosum. Common Grape Hyacinth. Raceme enlarged 12 times.
c Thujopsis dolabrata. Hatchet-leaved Arbor Vitae. Part of a branch enlarged 10 times.
- 79 *Symphytum officinale*. Common Comfrey, Consound, Black-wort, Alum, Back-wort. Flower enlarged 25 times.
- 80 *Papaver orientale*. Oriental Poppy. Flower-bud enlarged 5 times.
- 81 *Asclepias syriaca — cornuti*. Milkweed, Swallow-wort. Flower enlarged 18 times.

- 82 *Asclepias syriaca* — *cornuti*. Milkweed, Swallow-wort. Flower enlarged 18 times.
- 83 *Serratula nudicaulis*. Bare-stemmed Common Saw-wort. Seeds enlarged 5 times.
- 84 *Cirsium canum*. Thistle. Flower-head enlarged 12 times.
- 85 *Tellima grandiflora*. Flower enlarged 25 times.
- 86 *Centaurea ruthenica*. Russian Knap-weed. Seminal-capsule enlarged 8 times.
- 87 *Brunella grandiflora*. Large-flowered Self-heal. Young shoot enlarged 8 times.
- 88 *Symphytum officinale*. Common Comfrey, Consound, Black-wort, Alum, Back-wort. Cincinnus enlarged 8 times.
- 89 *Symphytum officinale*. Common Comfrey, Consound, Black-wort, Alum, Back-wort. Cincinnus enlarged 8 times.
- 90 *Phacelia tanacetifolia*. Panicles, enlarged 12 times.
- 91 *Scabiosa columbaria*. Small or Lilac-flowered Scabious. Seminal-capsule enlarged 10 times.
- 92 *Acanthus mollis*. Common or Soft-leaved Bear's Breech. Bracteoles, with the flowers removed, enlarged 4 times.
- 93 *Symphytum officinale*. Common Comfrey, Consound, Black-wort, Alum, Back-wort. Inflorescence enlarged 8 times.
- 94 *Allium ostrowskianum*. Umbel of a Garlic-plant enlarged 6 times.
- 95 *Aquilegia chrysantha*. Golden-flowered Columbine. Flower enlarged 6 times.
- 96 *Aconitum*. Aconite, Wolf's-bane, Monk's Hood. Young shoot enlarged 6 times.
- 97 *Phacelia tanacetifolia*. Panicles enlarged 4 times.
- 98 *Phacelia tanacetifolia*. Panicles enlarged 4 times.
- 99 *Salvia*. Sage. Stem of a plant enlarged 5 times.
- 100 *Cirsium canum*. Thistle. Flower-heads enlarged 4 times.
- 101 *a* *Cirsium canum*. Thistle: enlarged twice.
b *Phlomis umbrosa*. Jerusalem Sage. Young shoot enlarged 4 times.
c *Salvia*. Sage. End of a stem enlarged 6 times.
- 102 *Serratula nudicaulis*. Bare-stemmed Common Saw-wort. Seeds enlarged 4 times.

- 103 *Abutilon*. Lime-Mallow. Seminal-capsules enlarged 6 times.
- 104 *Papaver*. Poppy-head: a enlarged 6 times and b enlarged 10 times.
- 105 *Anemone blanda*. Winter Wind-flower. Flower enlarged 8 times.
- 106 *Lyonia calyculata*. Variety of heather. Flowers enlarged 8 times.
- 107 a *Convolvulus sepium*. Bear-bind, Hedge-Bells, Bell-bind. Flower-bud enlarged 5 times.
b *Campanula medium*. Canterbury Bells. Flower enlarged 6 times.
c Same as a.
- 108 *Vaccinium corymbosum*. Common or Swamp Blueberry: enlarged 10 times.
- 109 a *Andromeda floribunda*. Lily-of-the-Valley Tree, Free-flowering Andromeda. Flowers enlarged 6 times.
b *Vaccinium corymbosum*. Common or Swamp-Blueberry. Flower enlarged 20 times.
c *Acanthus mollis*. Common or Soft-leaved Bear's Breech. Inner parts of flower enlarged 5 times.
- 110 *Erica herbacea*. Heather. Flowers enlarged 16 times.
- 111 *Campanula alliariaefolia*. Alliaria-leaved Bell-flower. Flower enlarged 10 times.
- 112 *Centaurea macrocephala*. Great-headed Centaury. Seed-head enlarged 5 times.
- 113 *Asclepias speciosa*. Milkweed. Umbel enlarged 3 times.
- 114 *Achillea millefolium*. Common Milfoil, Common Yarrow. Cyme enlarged 8 times.
- 115 *Asclepias syriaca* — *cornuti*. Milkweed, Swallow-wort. Umbel enlarged 6 times.
- 116 *Asclepias speciosa*. Milkweed. Umbel enlarged 8 times.
- 117 *Asclepias incarnata*. Swamp-Milkweed. Umbel enlarged 6 times.
- 118 *Achillea filipendulina*. Noble Yarrow. Cyme enlarged 15 times.
- 119 *Achillea clypeolata*. Milfoil. Cyme enlarged 15 times.
- 120 *Tellima grandiflora*. Flower enlarged 12 times.

