



The Botanical Mind - Art, Mysticism and The Cosmic Tree

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The Botanical Mind: Art, Mysticism and The Cosmic Tree looks back through history at diverse cultural, spiritual and mythological traditions to reappraise the importance of plants to life on this planet. The exhibition presents an extraordinary array of artworks by over 70 surrealist, modern, visionary, outsider, indigenous Amazonian and contemporary artists, spanning more than 500 years. Through the symbolism of diverse cultural artefacts and the works of mystics, artists and thinkers around the world, The Botanical Mind reveals how the vegetal kingdom has metaphysical importance to the development of consciousness and spirituality.

Drawing on esoteric ideas from alchemy and the western occult tradition, this exhibition relates the fractal geometries that appear in plant shapes and patterns to the ancient metaphysical belief in terrestrial life as a microcosm of the universe - the celestial expanse of the macrocosm. Many of the works in the show revolve around the concept of the Axis Mundi (World Axis) or Cosmic Tree, a universal archetype that appears in the symbolism and mythologies of numerous cultures connecting the human condition to the physical and transcendental universe. The Botanical Mind investigates the secular and spiritual aspects of plants, their ongoing significance to human life, and how we engage with and activate them in culture, counter-culture, art and music.

This richly illustrated publication includes essays by the curators and contributions from scholars on the key themes of the exhibition - alchemy, art history, plant ontology, Gaian ecology, anthropology and ethnobotany - unifying philosophical, scientific, spiritual and artistic approaches to meditate on the cosmic significance of plants in different worldviews.

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