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KARL BLOSSFELDT

LES ESSENTIELLES

TEXT BY HANSJÖRG KÜSTER

Karl Blossfeldt (1865-1932) was a great pioneer of botanic photography, yet he was neither a professional photographer nor a botanist. As a professor at the Kunstgewerbliche Lehranstalt (Academy of Applied Arts) in Berlin, sculptor, and amateur photographer, his interest in the plant world was of an artistic and didactic nature: he concerned himself with the structure of plants, their "superlative artistic form" born of "expedience," which he sought to make visible and comparable with the aid of photography. He published two seminal works—Art Forms in Nature (1929) and Art Forms in Nature, Second Series (1932)—that had a lasting impact on the art of his day and were enthusiastically received by both the Surrealists and the New Objectivity movement. The books brought overnight fame to their author and went on to become classics in the history of art and photography. Les Essentielles is a compilation of the best of Blossfeldt's strikingly sober yet poetic portraits of plants.

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