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Light Leaf: Observations of Leaves in Light

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Abstract

For me, spending time in isolation yielded some interesting findings, as I began to closely observe the various leaves that engulf my backyard. Every new day brought with it a new detail, a subtlety with every shift in light, revealing an endless array of abstractions, textures and colors. I was seeing the hidden life of leaves dancing in the sunlight. Naturally, I began documenting my observations.

Keywords

Art in nature, photography

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Cover Page Footnote

Mokrohajská, C., 2020. What is a Wunderkammer? Best Cabinets of Curiosities | DailyArt. [online] DailyArtMagazine.com - Art History Stories. Available at: Demeulemeester, T., 2017. Wunderkammer: An Exotic Journey Through Time. 1st ed. Tiel: Lannoo Publishers.

Light Leaf: Observations of Leaves in Light

Paul Kelley. Artist

“The characteristic of arousing surprise for the observer is typical for the so-called Wunderkammer or Cabinet of Curiosities. These are real rooms of wonders where, in an undifferentiated mix of art and science, of naturalia and artificialia, the most unusual finds are associated with all sorts of man-made works, rarities, and wonders.”[Caroline Galambosova; 2022]

During times of social distancing due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, I have thought a lot about play and observation. Asking myself, what it means to be playfully curious? I would like to think I always adhere to a playful mindset and that I practice critical observation of my surroundings. This habit of mind is one shared by art and science – by both artists and scientists. This is best illustrated in a letter to biographer Carl Seelig, where Albert Einstein states, “I have no special talents. I am only passionately curious.”[Calaprice, 2011; p. 20] This humble and inquisitive attitude is a cornerstone of my art practice – a practice that I see as a way of being and a major philosophy of my life. The pandemic certainly tested this attitude and perhaps spawned a renewed focus – an opportunity to sharpen that focus and an important reminder to not lose sight and take for granted all that surrounds us.

We have seen as a collective society that when our daily routines and comforts are disrupted, we can let it get the better of us. Rather than being inconvenienced, a silver lining of this pandemic, that I found, was an opportunity to slow down. It is vital to find opportunities to slow down – as the old saying goes: Stop and smell the roses. New attitudes toward life or stressful situations can be born – new things to see, discover and learn. This resilience is a shared one. Not just by artists and scientists but by all of humanity. This feature of critical observation and passionate curiosity is common throughout the practice of both art and science, but that is because its foundation lies at the core of human experience – a resiliency to discover and engage in the face of discomfort.

For me, spending time in isolation yielded some interesting findings, as I began to closely observe the various leaves that engulf my backyard. Every new day brought with it a new detail, a subtlety with every shift in light, revealing an endless array of abstractions, textures and colors. I was seeing the hidden life of leaves dancing in the sunlight. Naturally, I began documenting my observations through photography and sketching out ideas with this “so-called Wunderkammer” in mind.

In a romantic yet heartbreaking sense, I was attempting to find light in the darkness of the pandemic. What I found was a cabinet of curiosities or wonders and wanted to present my findings as such. Through a variety of mediums and media such as photography, ink, light, found objects, found frames and a book of prints documenting my work, I share with the viewer that my backyard or better yet – our world – is a giant cabinet of wonder. A curious collection of things, objects, artifacts and specimens all waiting to be observed, discovered and perhaps, rediscovered.

References

- Calaprice, A. (2011) On Einstein himself. *The Ultimate Quotable Einstein*, Princeton University Press
- Galambosova, C. (2022). What is a Wunderkammer? Best cabinets of curiosities. *DailyArt Magazine*, 28 Oct. 2022, <https://www.dailyartmagazine.com/cabinets-of-curiosities/>



Light Leaf Installation

Photographic prints, smartphone prints, film, found objects, custom frames, found frames, LED, voltage, ink, marker, glue.



Through the Looking Glass. Light leaf Sketch



Mulberry Tree. Morus Alba. Light Leaf Box



Orange Tree. Citrus Sinensis. February Fourth at Four



Orange Tree. Citrus Sinensis. Wildfire



Mulberry Tree. *Morus Alba*. Autumnal.
Mulberry Tree. *Morus Alba*. Sunburn



Mulberry Tree. *Morus Alba*. Scattering



Mulberry Tree, *Morus Alba*. Moonlight.
Morus Alba Through *Citrus sinensis*. Twilight.



Mosquito Plant. *Pelargonium Citrosum*. Magnified.



Morus Alba on Paddle Plant. *Kalanchoe Thyrsiflora*. Magnified.



Light Leaf Display. (Light Box + Book of Images)
Redlands Visitor Center. Redlands, CA.