

The Botanical Mind Online Launching 6 May 2020



Adam Chodzko, *O, you happy roots, branch and mediatrix*, still, 2020.
Two screen video, Hildegard von Bingen's *lingua ignotae* and image recognition algorithm.
Image courtesy the artist.

Humanity's place in the natural order is under scrutiny as never before, held in a precarious balance between visible and invisible forces: from the microscopic threat of a virus to the monumental power of climate change. Drawing on indigenous traditions from the Amazon rainforest; alternative perspectives on Western scientific rationalism; and new thinking around plant intelligence, philosophy and cultural theory, *The Botanical Mind Online* investigates the significance of the plant kingdom to human life, consciousness and spirituality across cultures and through time. It positions the plant as both a universal symbol found in almost every civilisation and religion across the globe, and the most fundamental but misunderstood form of life on our planet.

This new online project has been developed in response to the COVID-19 crisis and the closure of our galleries due to the pandemic. *The Botanical Mind: Art, Mysticism and The Cosmic Tree* was originally conceived as a trans-generational group exhibition, bringing together surrealist, modernist and contemporary works alongside historical and ethnographic artefacts, textiles and manuscripts spanning more than 500 years. Scheduled to open on Earth Day, 22 April 2020, the exhibition has now been postponed. In the meantime, we are launching this complimentary online programme of new artist commissions, podcasts, films, texts, images and audio, expanding on and enriching the ideas and issues informing the show.

Including new digital commissions and online works by **Adam Chodzko, Tamara Henderson, Ghislaine Leung, James Richards and Steve Reinke, Joachim Koester, Gemma Anderson and Kerstin Brätsch**; a focus on the Yawanawa people of Amazonian Peru, who were to travel to London to take part in the exhibition but are now self-isolating in their village; and a new podcast series drawing on some of the leading voices in the fields of science, anthropology, music, art and philosophy; the project will form an expanding archive exploring ideas of plant sentience, indigenous cosmologies, radical botany, queer nature, Gaia theory, quantum biology, and the influence of psychoactive plant medicines on various cultures and counter-cultures across the globe. The website will feature archival material and new contributions from artists, musicians, writers and thinkers including: **Carl Jung, Bruce Conner, Hildegard Von Bingen, Ithell Colquhoun, Hilma af Klint, Wolfgang Paalen, Brion Gysin, Philip Taaffe, Matt Mullican, Giorgio Griffa, Linder, Sarah Angliss, Dr Stephan Harding, Monica Gagliano, Kirk Barley, Terence McKenna, Simon Ling, Priscilla Telman and Vincent Moon, Bernd Brabec De Mori, John Dupré, Jagadish Chandra Bose, Annie Bessant and Charles Leadbeater, Carol Bove, Andrea Büttner, Cerith Wyn Evans, Rachid Koraïchi, Daniel Rios Rodriguez, Penny Slinger, Fred Tomaselli, Delfina Muñoz de Toro, Alexander Tovborg, Lee Ufan, and others.**

During this period of enforced stillness, our behaviour might be seen to resonate with plants: like them we are now fixed in one place, subject to new rhythms of time, contemplation, personal growth and transformation. Millions of years ago plants chose to forego mobility in favour of a life rooted in place, embedded in a particular context or environment. The life of a plant is one of constant, sensitive response to its environment – a process of growth, problem-solving, nourishment and transformation, played out at speeds and scales very different to our own. In this moment of global crisis and change there has perhaps never been a better moment to reflect on and learn from them.

The Botanical Mind is curated by Gina Buenfeld and Martin Clark. The Botanical Mind Podcast Series has been developed and produced with Matthew Williams and Alannah Chance.

A fully illustrated 300-page catalogue will be published to accompany the exhibition later this year, available from camdenartcentre.org

As we launch this ambitious new project, and a new approach to our digital programmes, we are also sharing a new identity. Developed earlier this year, working with Harry Pearce and the renowned Pentagram, our new logotype draws on Camden Art Centre's rich history, reinforcing both its international reputation and its strong sense of place. Reaffirming our status as a visual art institution and inspired by research in the archives, the 's' has now been dropped from 'Arts Centre'. The typeface, New Rail Alphabet, is a collaboration between A2 Type Foundry and Margaret Calvert. The original version (designed by Margaret Calvert and Jock Kinneir) was developed in 1965 for London Liverpool Street Station, the same year that Camden Art Centre was established. Sophisticated and modern, it celebrates and draws on the organisation's remarkable history, while emphasising its understated confidence, integrity, and unique position within the local and global community.

Notes to editors

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Camden Art Centre

Camden Art Centre is a place for art and artists; a place for the curious, the novice and the expert alike. It's a place to see, to make, to learn and to talk about contemporary art whether in our building, attending off-site projects and collaborations or via our digital forums. Through our programme of exhibitions, learning, courses, events and residencies, we invite everyone to engage with art and the people that make it – to push boundaries, explore and connect to their own creativity.