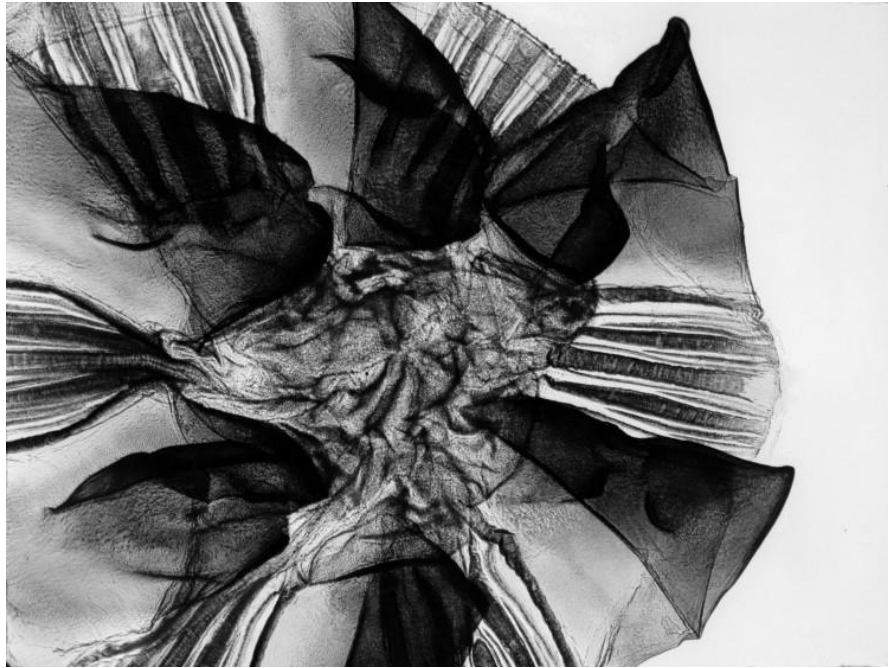


CRAVE

THE MAGIC OF THE “MICROCOSMOS” REVEALED IN PHOTOGRAPHS

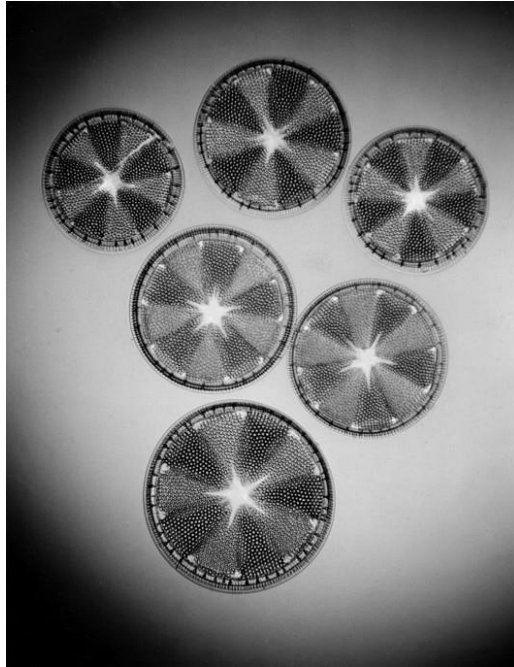
Under the lens of a microscope, German artist Carl Strüwe discovered the beauty of a previously invisible world.
By: Miss Rosen May 17, 2016



Under a microscope, a new universe emerges to the sighted world. In 1926, the electron microscope was a brand new phenomenon. With a beam of accelerated electrons, it can achieve magnifications up to 10M times in size, illuminating infinite worlds never known before. It was in that same year that German graphic designer Carl Strüwe made his first photograph through a microscope. With the eye of an artist rather than a scientist, Strüwe recorded the formal genius of Nature in all her glory, revealing the glorious rhythms, patterns, and shapes that are both biological in design and captivating in aesthetic.

A self-taught photographer, Strüwe dedicated the next three decades of his life to *Formen des Mikrokosmos* (Forms of the Microcosmos), which resulted in a set of 280 microphotographs, and in a 1955 book of that name. His intensive study, which concluded in 1959, elevated microphotography to an art. In Strüwe's work, we see a bridge to abstract art in a space mediated by Nature herself as order emerges from the chaos.

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Carl Strüwe: *Microcosmos*, on view at Steven Kasher Gallery, New York, through June 4, 2016, presents over 50 black and white prints made by the artist of his microphotographs from 1926 –1959. This is the first solo exhibition of the German photographer in the United States since his 1949 solo show at the Brooklyn Museum. The press release for that show observed the photographs often remind us of modern artists such as Klee or Kandinsky and yet they do not encroach upon the field of painting. Rather they suggest possible sources and explanations for modern abstract art, unearthing a whole world of beauty invisible to the naked eye.”

Among his subjects for study were the ovary, the proboscis, and scales on the wing of various butterflies, plankton in an algae colony, and the trachea of an unidentified insect, and the chewing stomach of a cockroach. Strüwe’s love for form informs his choice, each subject studied as an object of beauty unto itself. Its function or identity becomes a context by which to wonder just how far the depths of human knowledge will ultimately go.



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Strüwe used the tools of modernity as a means to investigate, to add a layer to the studies that practitioners of science had been practicing. At the same time, Strüwe was introducing a new layer to the practice of photography. In the introduction to his 1955 book, cited Fernand Leger, Paul Klee, Willi Baumeister, and Paul Cezanne as other artists advocating “to study sphere, cone and cylinder.”

With the camera and the microscope, Strüwe transcended the limits of the sighted world. With the eye of an artist, he made the previously invisible one of the greatest pleasures to behold.

