



PRESS RELEASE

The Intelligence of Plants

October 16, 2021 — January 30, 2022

Press tour: Friday, October 15, 2021, 11 am

Opening: Friday, October 15, 2021, 7 pm

With Berlinde De Bruyckere, Thomas Feuerstein, Forschungszentrum Jülich, Marshmallow Laser Feast, Pflanzensoziologisches Institut, Abel Rodríguez, Diana Scherer and Nicola Toffolini

Curated by Franziska Nori

With the exhibition *The Intelligence of Plants*, the Frankfurter Kunstverein wants to once again contribute to the debate about the Anthropocene: what new understanding of plant life have we humans gained, and what conclusions can we draw from these scientific findings? What significance do plants have for our existence and that of the entire planet? What power do plants and especially trees develop for the human narrative?

Scientific exhibits and contemporary artworks will be juxtaposed in the exhibition without hierarchy. With their novel observations and findings, the contributions of the scientific researchers provide a basis for philosophical and social considerations that put our historical form of life and economy up for discussion. The participating artists present voices that reveal a changed sensibility towards fellow plant life forms. These attitudes are representative of a new awareness that all life is interconnected.

How does the exhibition *The Intelligence of Plants*, with works of contemporary art and scientific exhibits, intend to contribute to the current socially relevant debate about the relationship between man and nature?

If plants were the first living things on the planet, they have proven to have developed successful methods to sustain themselves over millions of years and despite the five past species extinctions.

In recent decades, a growing number of scientific researchers have gained new insights into the way plants communicate with each other and across species: they share their habitat with other organisms in a symbiotic and collaborative way. They do not exist as individuals, but live in communities that depend on each other. They live both in water and on land and were the first living creatures to make the planet habitable. Knowing that they are physiologically different from us, as they have no central nervous system, no brain and no form of spoken language, we are increasingly recognising their immensely complex way of life.

Questioning the world from a purely human perspective, from the anthropocentric point of view, seems increasingly inadequate. For centuries, in our Western view, we have perceived the world as a system of opposites in which living beings compete against each other for survival in a Darwinian interpretation; a system in which only the strongest prevails. Especially in view of the ever more urgent environmental problem, numerous attempts are emerging for a new definition and an instruction for action in the relationship between man and nature. For capitalist and industrial approach, nature and living beings are quantified resources whose performance increase must lead to plannable growth and profit. What has taken place in the course of escalation in the 20th and 21st centuries are irreversible planetary processes of species extinction and biosphere destruction. Meanwhile, the awareness has arisen that only a radical change of perception and action and a new understanding of the interdependence of all living beings can ensure a chance for survival. From more and more observations and scientific findings, this view of the world gets fractures and a turn in the western thinking breaks through.

The exhibition *The Intelligence of Plants* aims to be an echoing chamber for these voices, and brings together a selection of exemplary artistic positions, scientific exhibits and thoughts from thinkers and scientists who are pioneering a new structure of thought.

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