

# YOU CAN LEARN A LOT OF THINGS FROM THE FLOWERS



## **A Study on Botanical Conservation**

### **Posed by Professional Models**

The project 'You Can Learn a Lot of Things From the Flowers' brings back to light a forgotten collection of preserved plant specimens that was once assembled by a passionate, amateur botanist.

The true identity of this self-made man remains shrouded in mystery and all that is known is his enormous appetite for pseudo-scientific research and occultism. His interests ranged from chemistry to esotericism, astrology and the magical power of "Egyptian" amulets. Fraud, amongst others, was his main occupation.

From his studies in ecology it is possible to trace the foundation of his ideas back to the work of Carl Linnaeus, an eighteenth century Swedish botanist. In his book 'Systema Naturae', Linnaeus first attempted a revolutionary system of taxonomy based around the number of a flower's reproductive organs, thus recognizing the sexuality of plants. As a late and devoted apostle of Linnaeus teachings, our inexperienced botanist decided to combine his research on botanical conservation with his passion for "les jeunes filles", young ladies photographed in seductive poses for the centrefolds of adult publications.

The result of this curious obsession is an extensive Herbarium of hybrid creatures, or what he once called the "femmes-fleur". Created within the interception and disjunctions of the plant silhouette, what was once the recipient of the voyeur's gaze has now become a specimen to be studied and analyzed. The male sexual projections and stereotypes are mediated and mitigated by the transformation. The plant and the object of desire: the two things brought together are equal. The botanist becomes the voyeur and vice-versa.

*'Since you cannot be my wife, you shall assuredly be my tree. I will wear you for my crown... And, as eternal youth is mine, you also shall be always green, and your leaf know no decay.'*

*Apollo and Daphne in Ovid's 'Metamorphosis'*

PAOLO GIARDI



Apollo and Daphne, Antonio del Pollaiuolo, 1470-80, National Gallery, London

