

of well-intended bureaucratic government foresters.

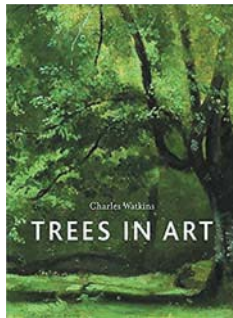
The coverage of the book is global with short, pithy chapters of work in Mexico, Peru, Indonesia, Uganda, China, Papua New Guinea, Myanmar, and Vietnam. For anyone who loves ethnobotany, there is a treasure trove of information on a wide diversity of plants and plant products.

I highly recommend this book for the general public, anthropologists, botanists, ethnobotanists, ecologists, foresters, and anyone interested in sustainable tropical forestry.

--Lytton John Musselman, *Blackwater Ecologic Preserve, Department of Biological Sciences, Old Dominion University, Norfolk, Virginia*
23529-0266

Trees in Art

Charles Watkins
2018. ISBN: 978-1-78-023930-9
Cloth, US\$55.00. 256 pp.
Reaktion Books, London



A number of attendees of botanical and other kinds of scientific meetings look for the nearest art museum and add that to their schedule. This book will certainly be of interest to all art lovers, as well as those who are interested in the role trees have played in depiction of many historical periods, often as background, but sometimes as central figures of the painting or other work of art. Charles Watkins takes us through the ages, with a decidedly British and northern European bias, relating the stories and historical underpinnings of many beautiful images. He includes work by famous artists, as well as a number less well known to

this reviewer.

Starting with the earliest depictions of trees in art, both B.C. and less than 100 years A.D., the author reviewed various teachers and their techniques. I was fascinated with 'blot' depictions of foliage and landscape, which Alexander Cozens developed as a technique for teaching students; he was inspired by a comment made by Leonardo da Vinci, that you can imagine faces, woods, and landscapes and other things from the patterns of marks found on an old wall (or clouds for that matter!). But da Vinci himself made many drawings and paintings of trees with extreme detail and accuracy. Grimm (who also illustrated *Natural History and Antiquities of Selbourne* for Gilbert White) was considered a good artist but lacking in his portrayal of trees, which were "not pleasing" and drawn with too much "humor." Not many artists before 1800 drew trees with great accuracy.

The 19th century saw a turn to realism with many portraying trees with bark and other features characteristic of the species. But then there were the Cubists (Braque, Picasso) and the Impressionists (Matisse, Monet, Redon), capturing the essence of plants with their shapes and textures, without the details.

Many ancient stories involved trees. In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, many women and men turn to trees. Cyparissus killed his favorite stag by accident and asked to mourn him until the end of time; he became an evergreen cypress. Trees are strong and can withstand a lot of abuse, as a chapter devoted to Lopping and Pollarding examines. It is incredible how trees can withstand such extreme torture (and this was without any mention of bonsai...)!

Watkins discusses sacred trees and woods, important in many cultures. There are trees that stand for the elders in a community, often single oaks in temperate zone cultures,

taking on a wizened appearance with their enormous size. He devotes a chapter to trees and timber, as he reminds the readers there is no natural woodland without human influence (including deliberate fire, grazing, wood cutting, tree disease, and pollution). The penultimate chapter considers Western art abroad, as there was a need to describe distant lands to those for whom travel was not possible. Many learned of the landscapes of faraway lands by the paintings and other depictions created by western artists traveling to those places, including works done in Australia, the Bahamas, Brazil, Canada, Egypt, Lebanon, and Tenerife.

The final chapter considers “more than real trees,” considering many phantasmagoric images, from the grotesque images of Hieronymous Bosch and Giuseppe Arcimboldo, to the ominous trees depicted by Arthur Rackham in the fairy tales of The Brothers Grimm, and the beautiful but made-up vegetation in the works of Henri Rousseau. Mind-bending works by Max Ernst, Salvador Dali, and more contemporary artists such as Vera Röhmer, Giuseppe Penone, and Ai Weiwei among others are depicted in the last pages—a forward-looking ending to this enjoyable book.

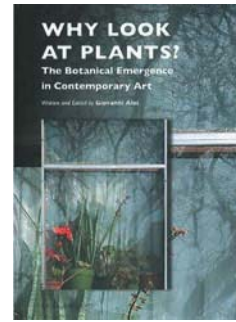
I truly learned a lot reading through this book and recommend it to everyone as a pleasing addition to your botanical bookshelf. It would make a nice gift to someone who likes nature, plants, and trees (being coffee-table sized), and a popular choice in any library collection.

--Suzanne Koptur, *Plant Ecologist and Professor of Biology, Florida International University*

Why Look at Plants? The Botanical Emergence in Contemporary Art

Giovanni Aloï, author and editor

2018. ISBN 978-9-004-37524-6
Hardcover; US\$34.95. 280 pp.
Koninklijke Brill, Leiden, the Netherlands.



Giovanni Aloï, an art historian specializing in the representation of animals and plants in contemporary art—who currently teaches at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Sotheby’s Institute of Art New York and London, and Tate Galleries and is the Editor in Chief of *Antennae: The Journal of Nature in Visual Culture*—offers an uncommon approach to botany in this collection of 35 essays. Combining historical and ecological analyses, he tackles topics from the perspective that local events are a consequence of, or influenced by, political processes that occur on a world scale. Overall themes embody plant–people relationships, organized into sections thematically: Forest, Trees, Garden, Greenhouse, Store, House, Laboratory, Other Spaces. Some encompass new, unexpected directions. Aloï opens each section, writing his own detailed, thoughtful, and engaging introductions to contributions by 27 others.

Aloï’s essential Introduction to the subject opens with tribute to the herbarium, effectively an iconographical precursor of natural history objectification. The practice of collecting live plant specimens for the purpose of study was introduced by Luca Ghini, founder of the academic study of nature in Bologna and Pisa. Dried specimens provided much-needed truth to begin secular, taxonomic projects based on the empirical scientific method. Next, Aloï observes the symbolism of plants (e.g., palm, iris, daffodil) and the iconography in Arcimboldo’s vegetal compositions aimed to criticize rich peoples’ conduct. He expands