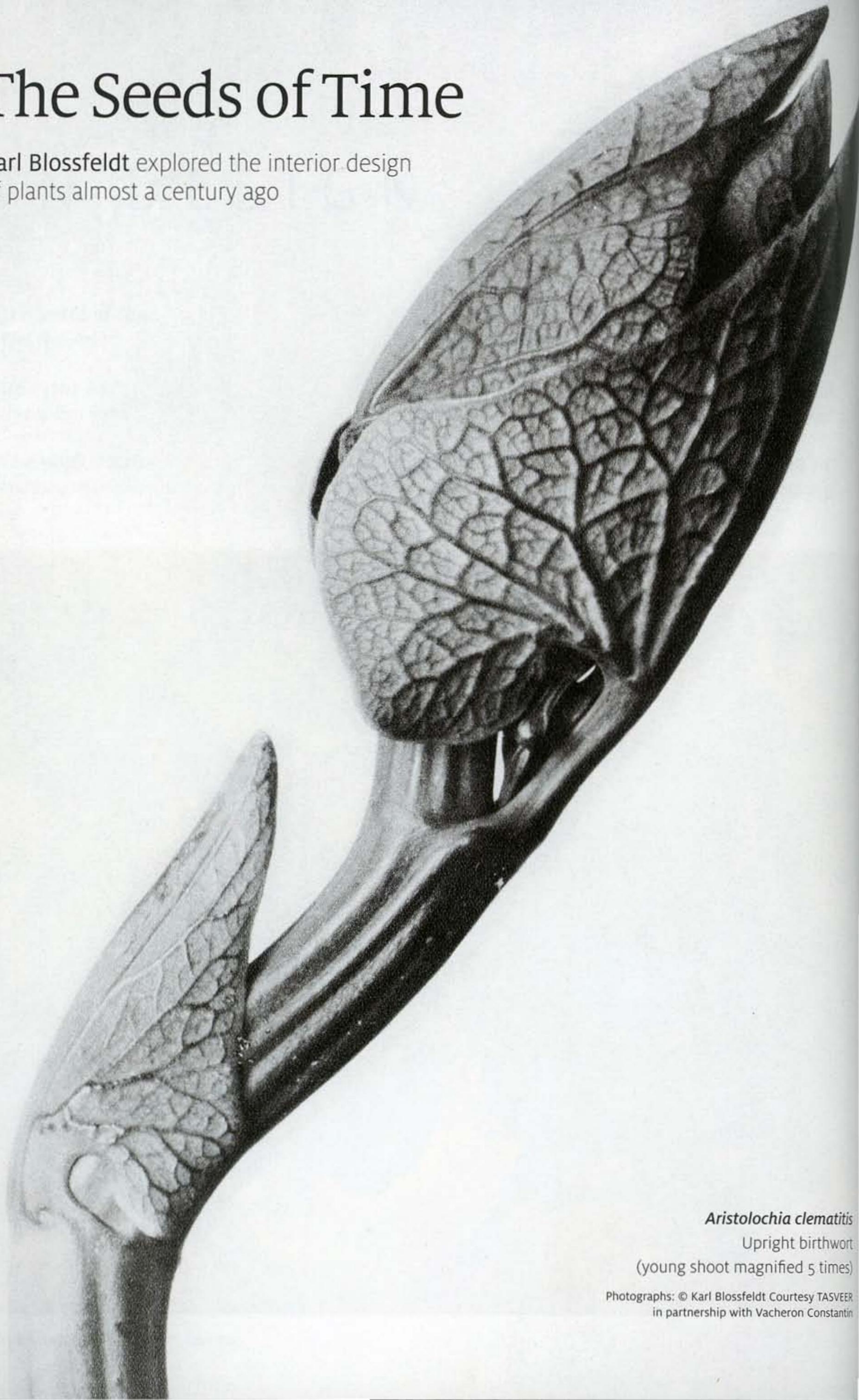


The Seeds of Time

Karl Blossfeldt explored the interior design of plants almost a century ago



Aristolochia clematitis

Upright birthwort

(young shoot magnified 5 times)

Photographs: © Karl Blossfeldt Courtesy TASVEER
in partnership with Vacheron Constantin

GERMAN PHOTOGRAPHER KARL BLOSSFELDT (1865-1932) is recognised as a pioneer of the New Objectivity in photography. His unique and extensive close-ups of plants were published in 1928 as *Urformen der Kunst (Art Forms in Nature)*. This botanist, sculptor and self-taught lensman created his catalogue of studies of natural forms as a teaching tool for his students. He was not trying to create art, rather a reliable record. *Art Forms in Nature* contains 120 single-sided rotary gravure plates and was shot when black and white was the only feasible option. In 2001, it was featured in *The Book of 101 Books: Seminal Photographic Books of the Twentieth Century*.

Though he worked at a time when film was not so well developed and its processing was somewhat experimental, Blossfeldt used this emerging medium to focus on the uniqueness of every plant form. As he wrote, "The plant may be described as an architectural structure, shaped and designed ornamentally."

He built a series of cameras with interchangeable lenses over three decades, and was able to examine his botanical specimens in unprecedented microscopic detail, revealing their tactile nature, intricate forms and uncanny characteristics. He extracted the plants from their natural environment, placed them in a clinical setting, sometimes magnifying them 30 times to capture their microcosmic aesthetics. In many of Blossfeldt's images, there is side lighting, apparently created by natural illumination which presumably came from a window; there was no elaborate studio set-up. The black and white emphasises different aspects of the objects such as curves and texture. There is a lack of translucence, a result perhaps of the limitations of the medium back then.

"Heraldic" is a term that might be applied to Blossfeldt's work. Some of his images remind one of carvings seen in churches. They are certainly all visions. As the philosopher Walter Benjamin declared, Blossfeldt "has played his part in that great examination of the inventory of perception, which will have an unforeseeable effect on our conception of the world".

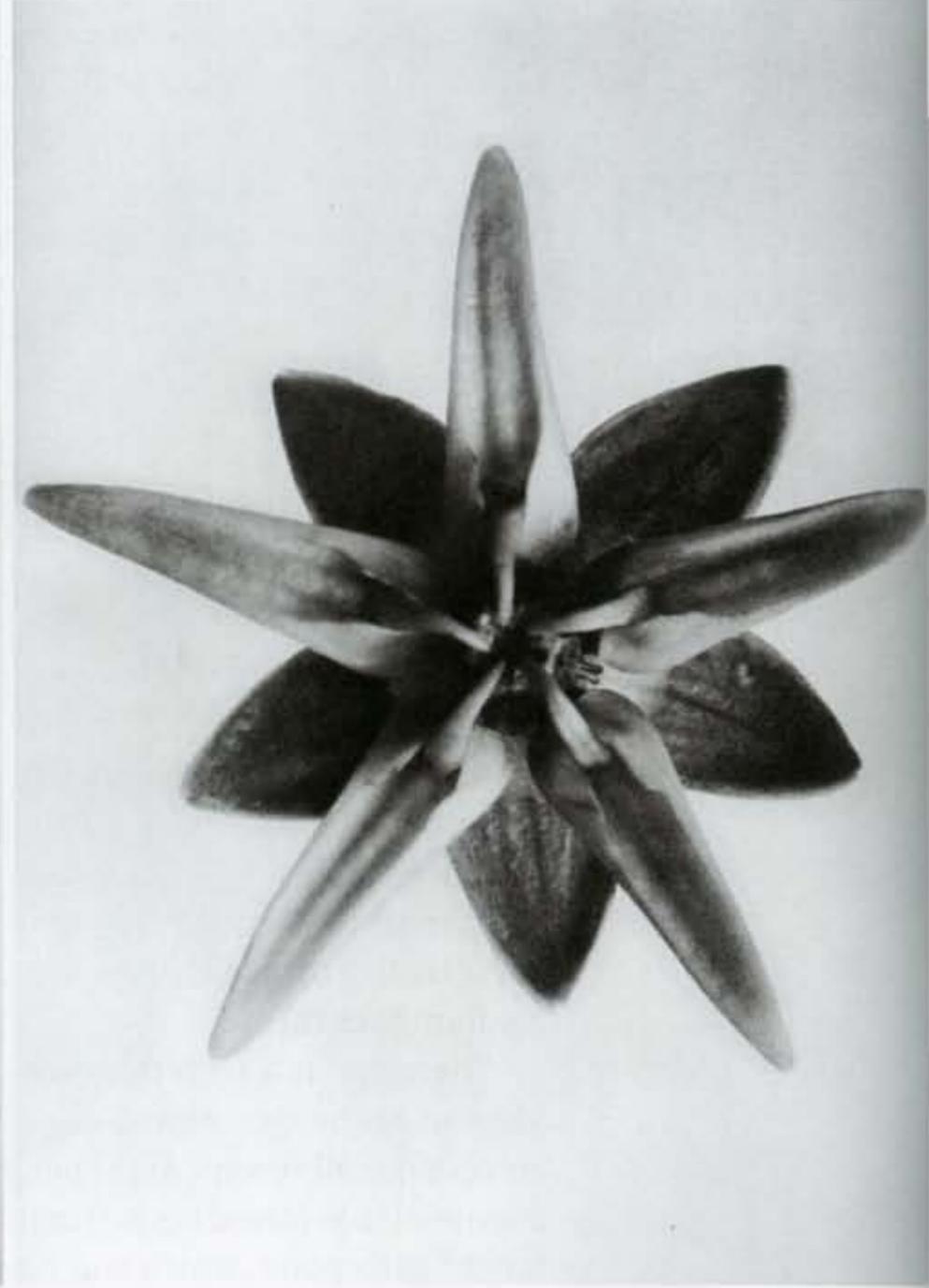
These images by Karl Blossfeldt will be shown in India for the first time this summer at an exhibition organised by Tasveer. More details at www.tasveerarts.com

The Seeds of Time

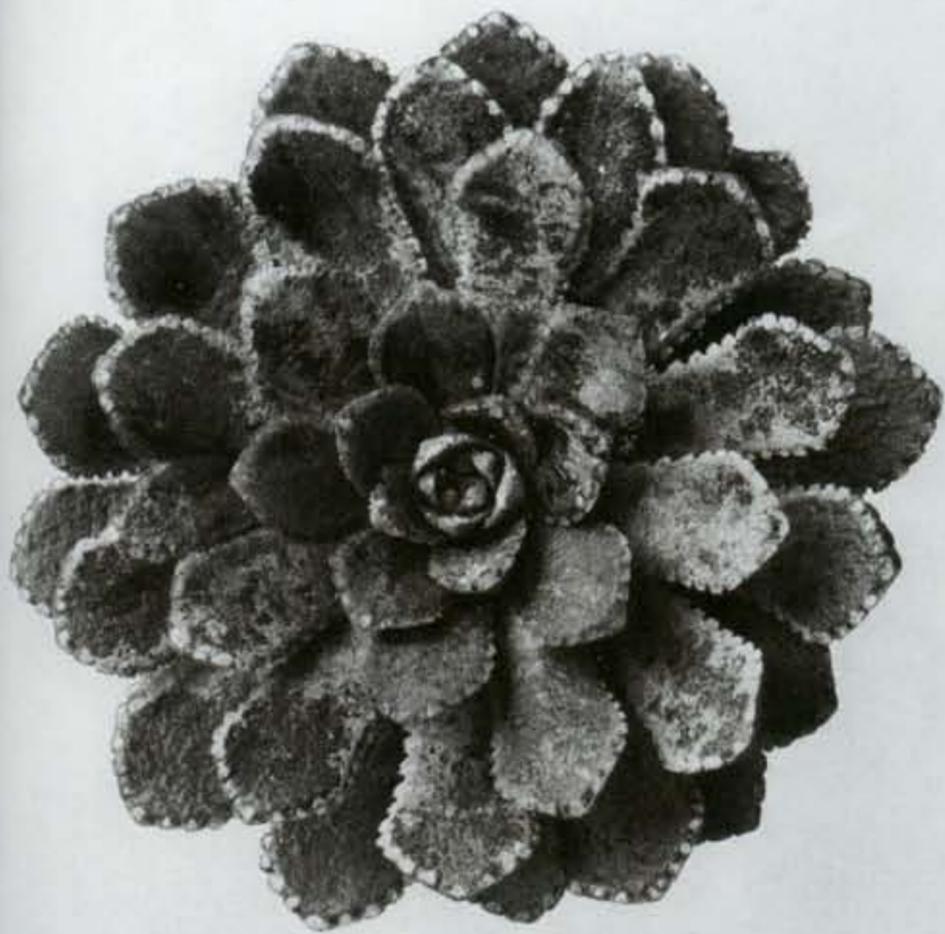
...the most beautiful and fertile
...of the world and will be a
...of the world and will be a
...of the world and will be a
...of the world and will be a



Cobaea scandens
Mexican ivy, cup-and-saucer vine
(calyx magnified 4 times)



Asclepias speciosa
Showy milkweed
(flower magnified 10 times)



Saxifraga aizoon
Margined pyramidal saxifrage
(leaf-rosette magnified 8 times)



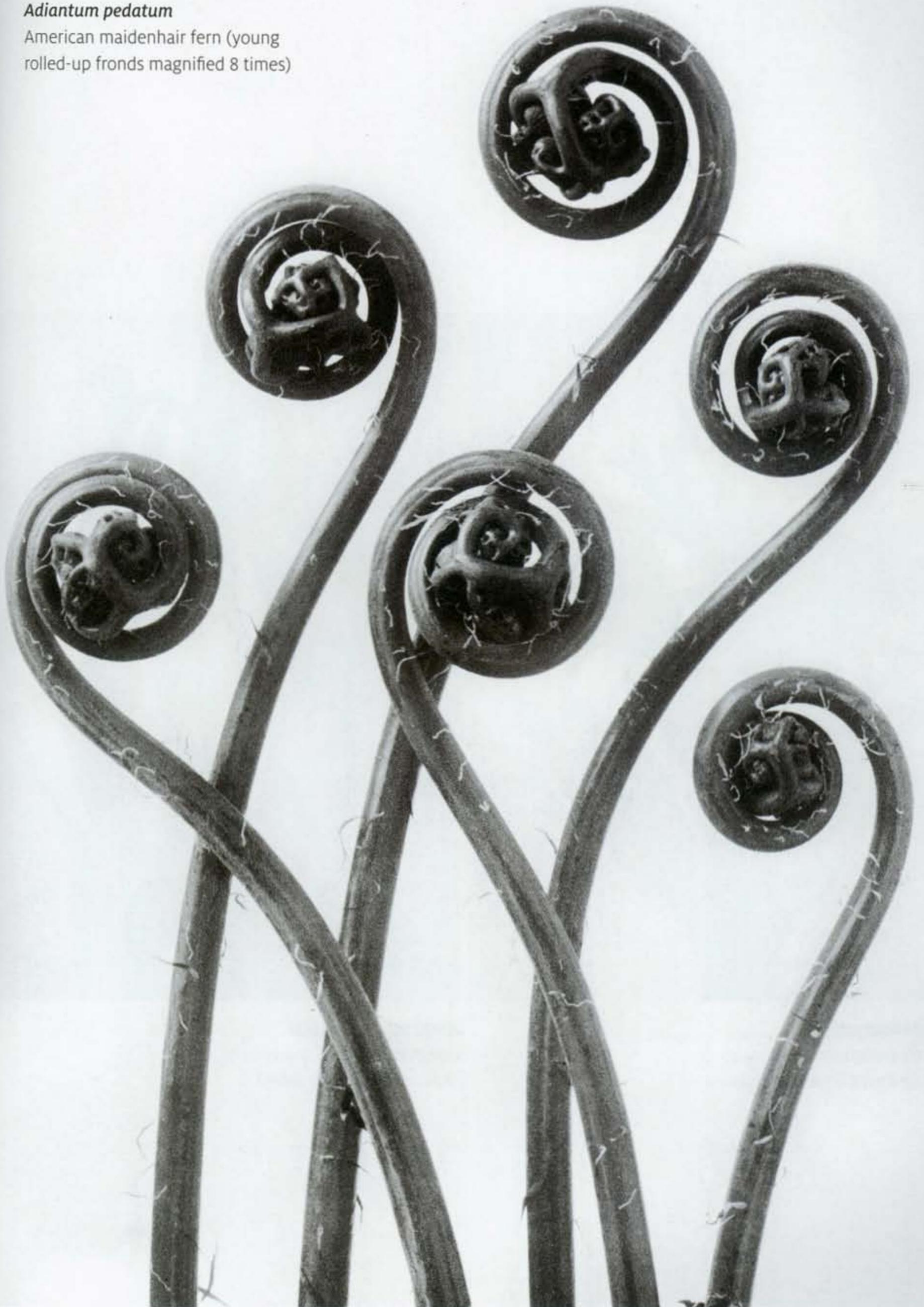
Saxifraga willkommiana
Willkomm's saxifrage
(leaf-rosette magnified 8 times)

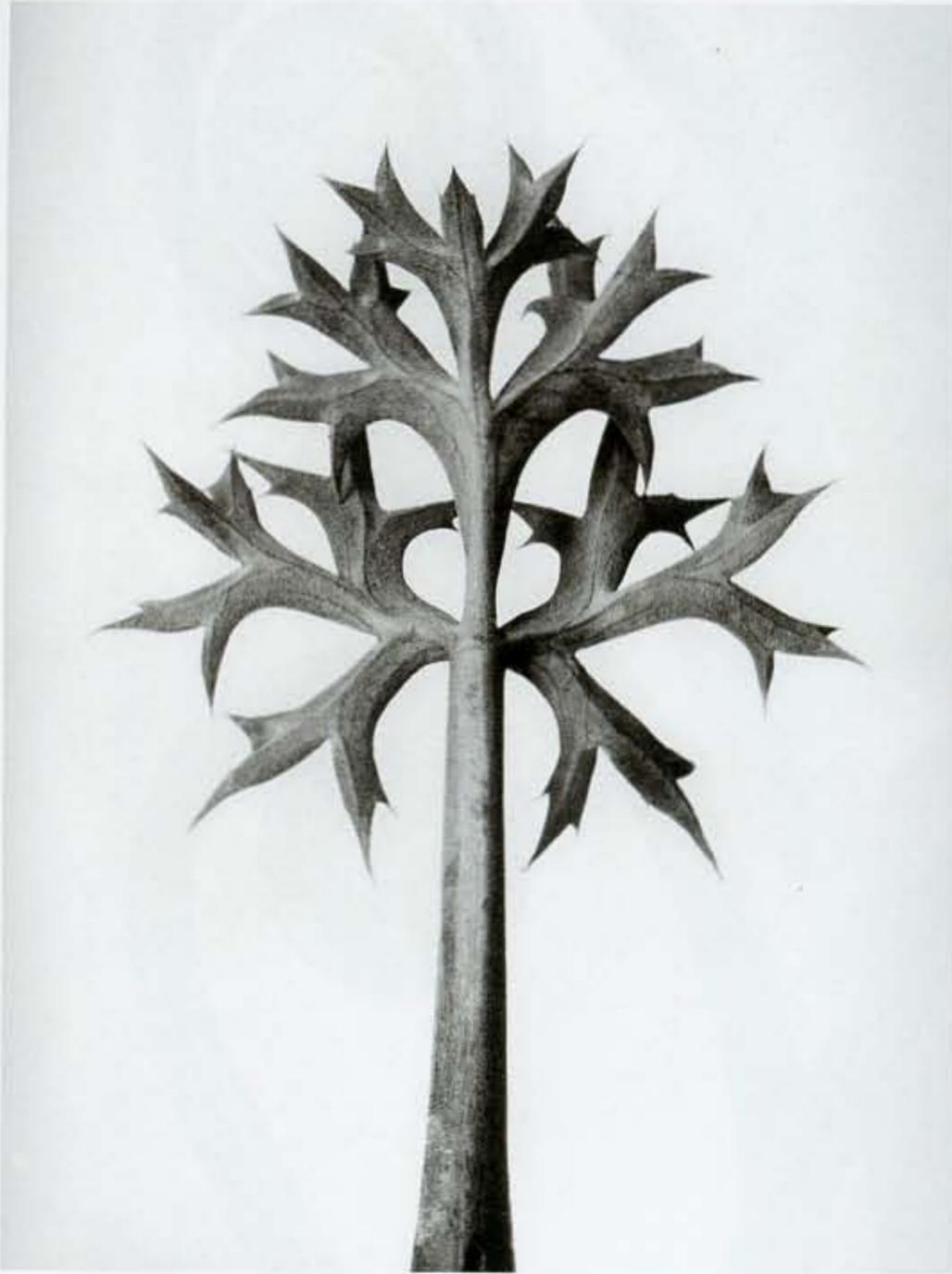


Struthiopteris germanica
German ostrich fern (young rolled-up
frond magnified 8 times)

Adiantum pedatum

American maidenhair fern (young
rolled-up fronds magnified 8 times)





Eryngium bourgatii
Bourgati's eryngo
(leaf magnified 5 times)



Aristolochia clematitis
Upright birthwort
(flowers magnified 7 times)

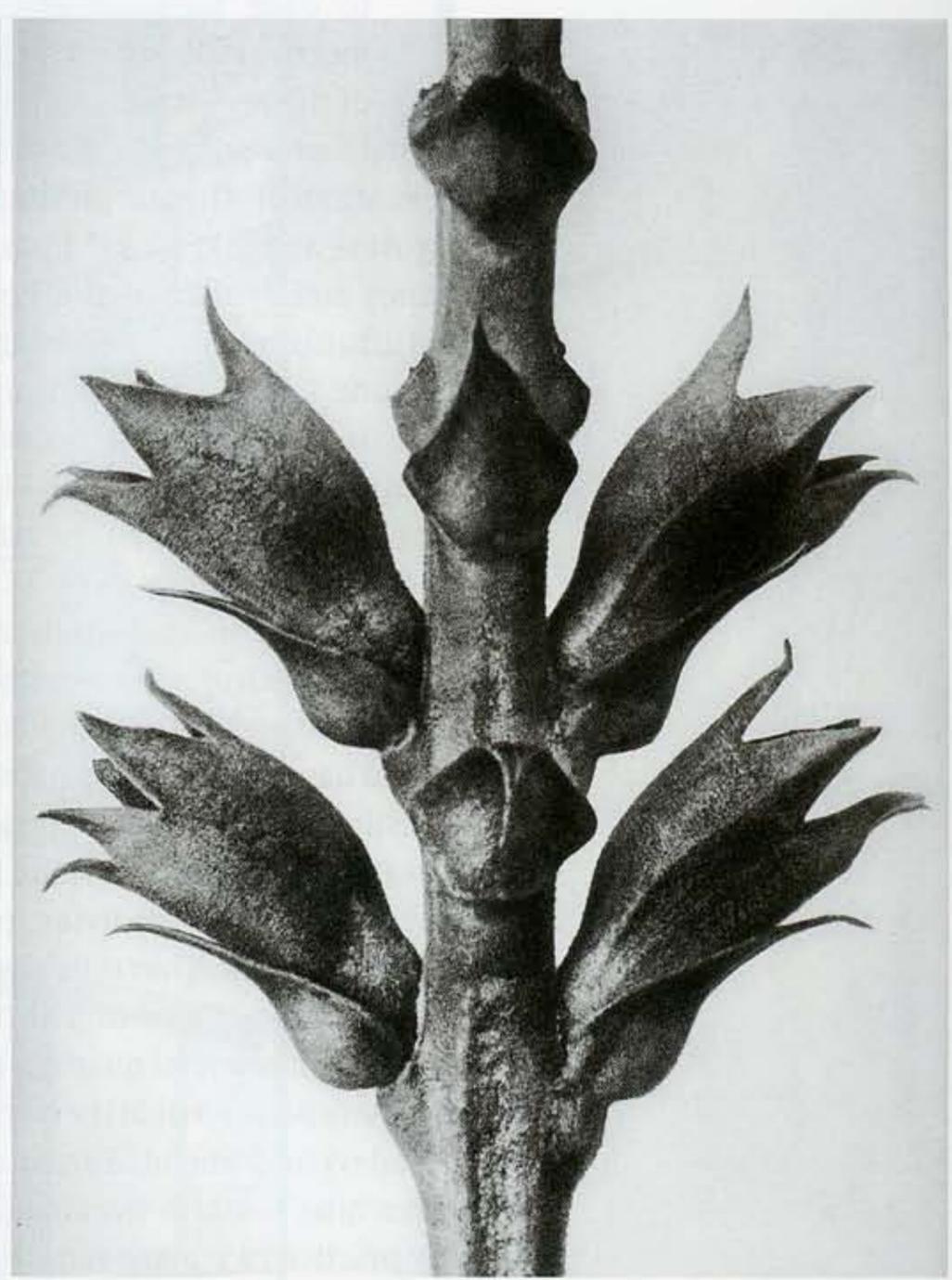
Up in the Air

... ..
... ..
... ..

THE



Cornus florida
American boxwood, flowering dogwood
(shoots magnified 6 times)



Physostegia virginiana
Virginian false dragonhead (stem with
calyxes and leaves magnified 15 times)