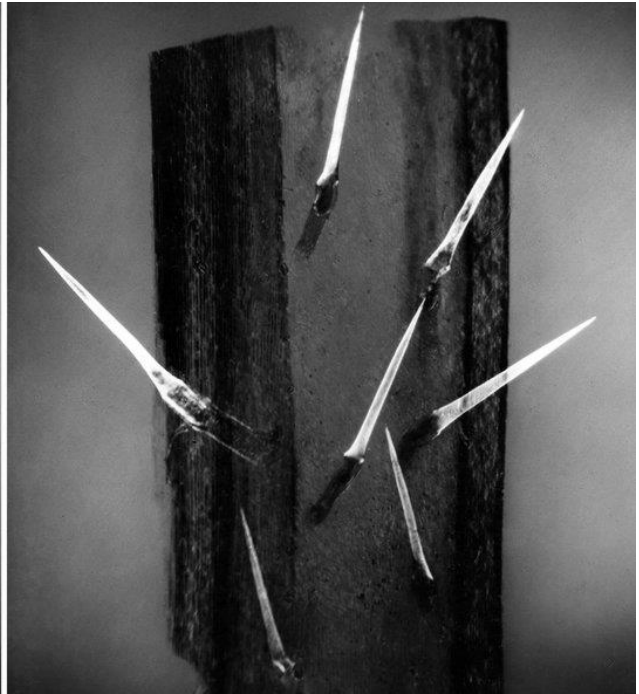
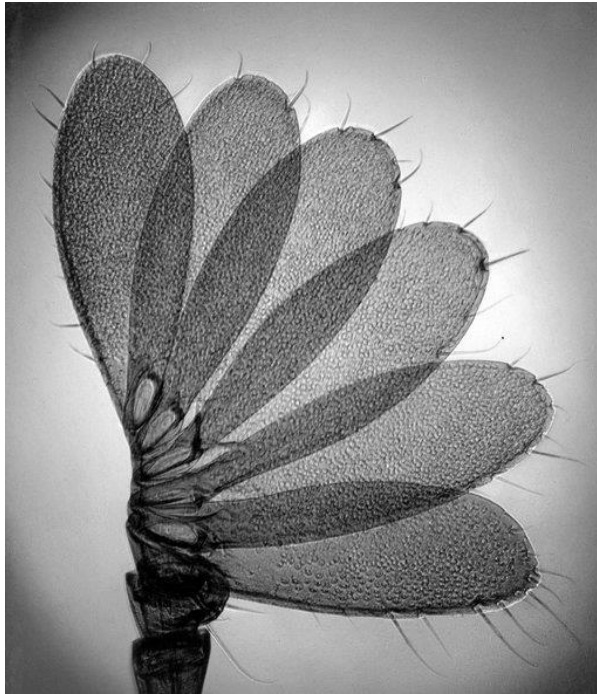




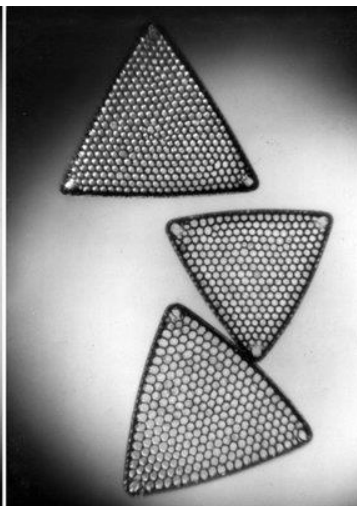
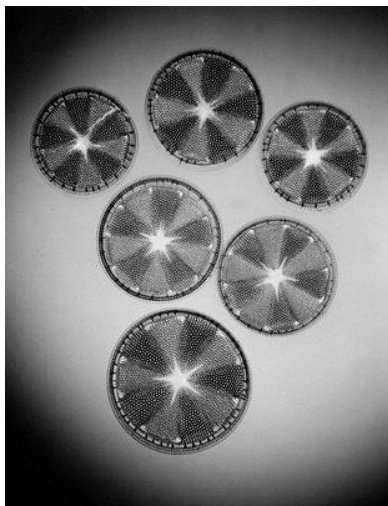
Magnifying the World of Beauty That Lives Under a Microscope

By MICHAEL ROSTON APRIL 5, 2016



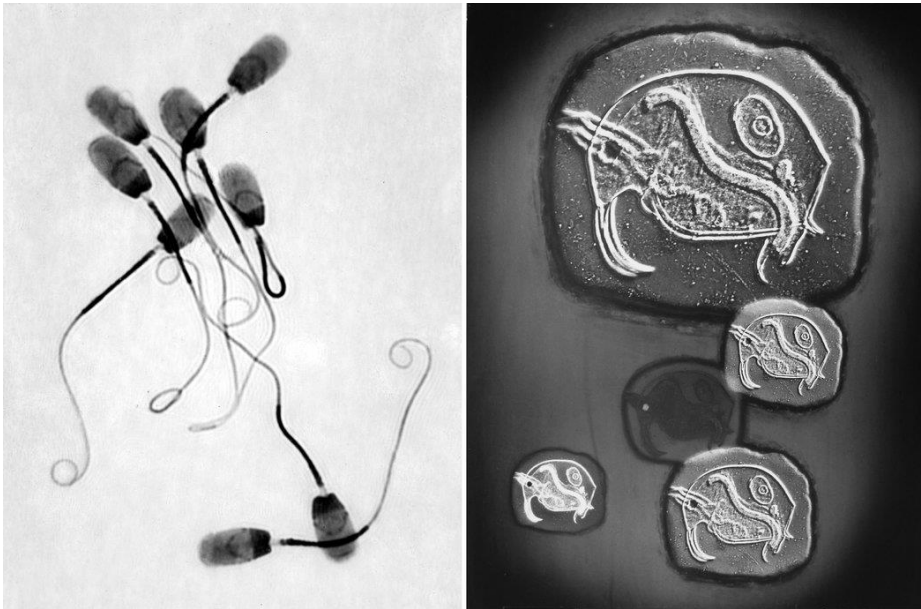
In the 1920s, before matter could be magnified millions of times under electron microscopes, a German graphic designer was developing his own techniques for capturing the minute wonders of organic life.

Carl Strüwe never gained fame during his lifetime, but over the decades his stark images of diatoms, spermatozoa and other life under the microscope have gathered admirers for their distinctive artistry. A selection of his works will go on display at the Steven Kasher Gallery in New York starting April 14.



When Mr. Strüwe began making photographs, he used microscopes that could only magnify items up to 2,000 times. The traditional scientific view under a microscope was rounded, so Mr. Strüwe cut black pieces of paper into rectangular shapes and set them over the biological subject matter in his slides. He then pointed his camera into the eye of the microscope, capturing the scene he had composed under the microscope.

The thoughtful way that he positioned his subjects in the microscope — his canvases — is what made his work so pioneering, said Gottfried Jäger, a photographer in Bielefeld, Germany, who is the administrator of Mr. Strüwe's estate. Mr. Strüwe saw great artistic potential, Mr. Jäger said, where before him, many only saw the objectivity of science.



Mr. Strüwe's work had little impact outside of Germany during his life because he lacked resources and did not speak languages other than German.

"He was a poor man, not very successful with his work during his own life," said Mr. Jäger.

Mr. Strüwe did make some appearances in the United States, including a Brooklyn Museum show in 1949. A number of his photos were also used in scientific texts, including this biology textbook from 1957.

The work of Carl Strüwe may mean more to art history than to science. But Mr. Jäger believes there is something to be learned from these photographs, even if they do not do much to further objective knowledge.

"They open a window in this fantastic, non-visible world," he wrote in an email. "He visualizes its meaning and beauty as its own reality."