

ALTERED REALITIES

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By *Linda Tilling*  
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A definition of reality is :

*'Property of being real, resemblance to original, real existence, what is real, what underlies appearances [...].'*

'Altered Realities' is an ongoing private photographic project exploring how perception can be altered without changing a fundamentally familiar structure. The pictures present the banal and the comfortably familiar in an unfamiliar way, objects and vistas that are part of the background and blend into the environment.

In the following pictures, abstracted organic forms, once a monotone of greens, have been changed and a title offered to seed a concept in the viewer of what a particular picture portrays for the artist. Picture sources include hothouses, woodland and domestic gardens. Each photowork starts life as ordinary photographs well-lit with natural light, taken in automatic mode on a digital camera with macro facilities. The photographs were then subjected to manipulation to give the graphic detail, using photoshop editing computer software. All that has happened is that the pictures are falsely coloured and the structures of the plants and fauna have been revealed. Returning to the definition '*what underlies appearances*', the pictures' bold outline of leaf and fungi form the structures and these are not immediately apparent to the eye, in some pictures they are easy to distinguish:

'Peacock' is reminiscent of the open tail display feather fan. Close inspection does not give the eye pattern or the bird's feather-structure. Lines are sharp and pointed in the fan. The picture-started life as a palm back-lit by sunlight filtering through a glass house. A plant-like structure is not immediately apparent.

'Vermicelli' is a tangled mass of fine strands, with a disc structure lone as a sentinel above the strands. The picture could be a badly-prepared film of a fungal mat viewed through a light microscope, but it is not. The disc structure and mat do not readily reveal a concept of size. The picture started out life

as a single mushroom growing through unkempt grass.

'Vertebrate' looks as if it has been stolen from an African hand-printed textile, the rich colours jumping from the page. The centre column of the picture gives a fluid backbone, if you look carefully the veins of the leaf can be seen.

'Underwood' is an aerial view of an autumnal forest floor and canopy, a view looking skywards into the trees; leaves are distinguishable; but the pattern that has been selected is more important than the individual components.

'Canopy' imitates the form of a copper beech but is an ordinary beech tree growing in the forest.

So: is the reality that is depicted fluid based on the viewer's perception, or fixed when we recognise a structure within the work, like a leaf or mushroom? Taking away the original colour of the plants and selecting areas that do not allow comparisons of scale alters the surface appearance of familiar leaf structures. The shapes do not alter, but the viewer has to look, rather than glance, in order to see the original underlying appearance.

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*Technical Administrator (Health & Safety), Royal Free & University College Medical School*