



Xavier Cortada, Miami Mangrove Forest (Downtown Miami, FL), 2004.

MIAMI MANGROVE FOREST

BY XAVIER CORTADA

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At its core, Miami Mangrove Forest functions as a metaphoric reforestation of downtown Miami. Initiated in 2004, Xavier Cortada's expansive public mural underneath the underpasses of I-95 explores the evolving dichotomy between the natural and built environments.

Mangroves, an essential aspect of much of Cortada's work, were chosen for their native heritage to the South Florida area. Mangrove forests were the dominant landscape of the state from the time of the first European settlers, subject matter previously portrayed in Cortada's Florida Mangrove painting from 2003. This allows for the work to be viewed as decidedly site-specific, there being a contextual resonance to the inclusion of mangroves in a project based in Miami.

Fully grown, mangroves serve a multitude of purposes, from providing habitats for a variety of marine and avian life to protecting coastal areas from storm surges.

The communal focus of Miami Mangrove Forest is further emphasized through the utility of the mangrove, it being a plant that literally protects and shelters communities of a variety of species. However, throughout the entirety of Miami Mangrove Forest, the depiction of mangroves is that of seedlings instead of fully-grown trees. This was conceptual in intent, the seedlings a representation of the individual citizens of Miami setting their roots in the young city.

This allows for a presentation that functions temporally, an implication of a city growing year by year, generation by generation, all while the painted mangroves exist in a state of permanent infancy.

"We've all come from different places to make Miami our home," said Cortada, "much like a mangrove seed washes up and takes root on a Florida sandbar and helps build new land where new life can take hold."



Cortada's "Pinecrest Mangrove Forest" (2019) is a 200-foot mural at Pinecrest Gardens that incorporates the iconic mangrove seedlings used to create Miami Mangrove Forest fifteen years earlier.



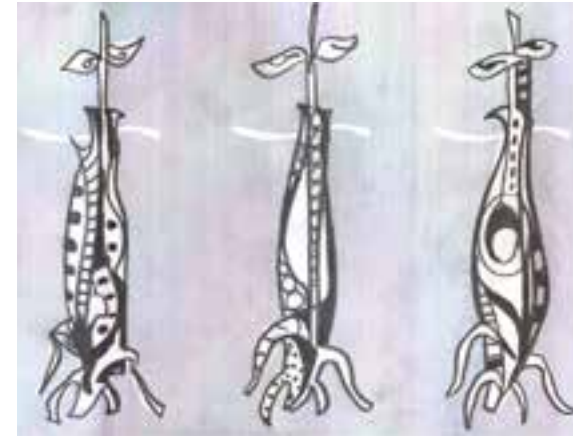
Miami Mangrove Forest OMNIART Exhibition, 2004.

Following Miami Mangrove Forest, Cortada continued with his usage of the mangrove as a form of symbolic iconography, leading to a more conceptualized understanding of the imagery's relevance toward the Miami community. This can be seen in the subsequent OMNIART exhibitions, OMNIART I in December 2004 (during Art Basel) and OMNIART II in January 2005 (during Art Miami).

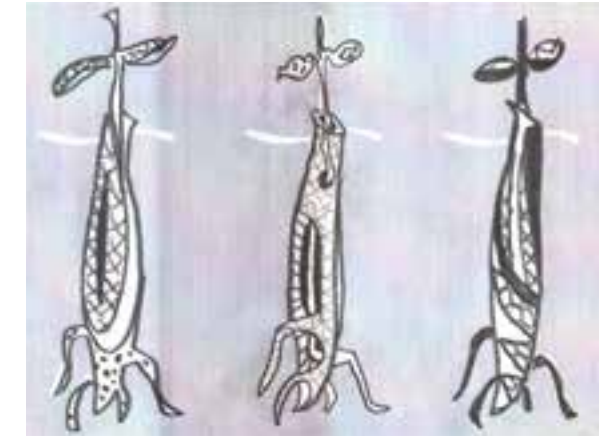
While the OMNIART exhibition(s) initially had the primary purpose of exhibiting the pictures of mangrove propagules Cortada drew for use in the creation of his Miami Mangrove Forest, they became a departure point for future socially engaged works within the artist's concentration, beginning with the Reclamation Project in 2006. Within the setting of the white cube, Cortada was able to acknowledge the significance of his iconography through its own presence, deploying nature in the context of urbanicity. This was done quite literally, actual mangroves arranged on a column, standing sentinel in the middle of the gallery space.

Fifteen years after Miami Mangrove Forest, Cortada led the creation of Pinecrest Mangrove Forest, a mural that depicts the fully-grown mangrove forest the seedlings from the original mural would eventually become. However, Pinecrest Mangrove Forest functions more than just a metaphoric reforestation of the local area, but as a prompt for literal reforestation, a conceptual and practical evolution from its predecessor. This is accomplished through its resonance with Cortada's Plan(t) project, an ambitious effort to plan for the future through the act of planting mangroves throughout Miami.

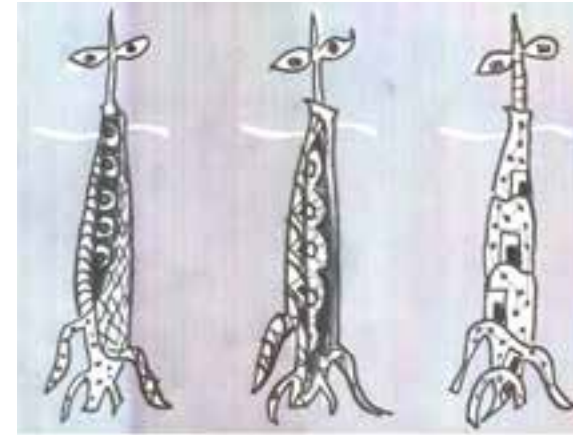
Xavier Cortada, Miami Mangrove Forest columns (1-56), pencil on paper, 8.5" x 10.5", 2004



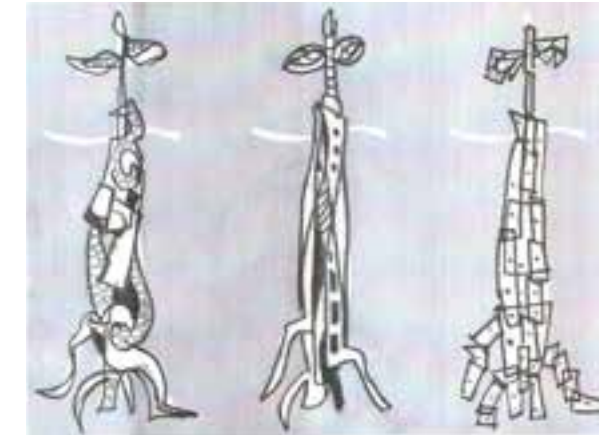
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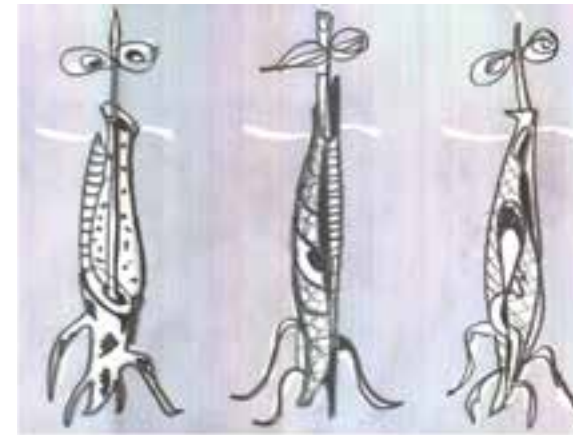
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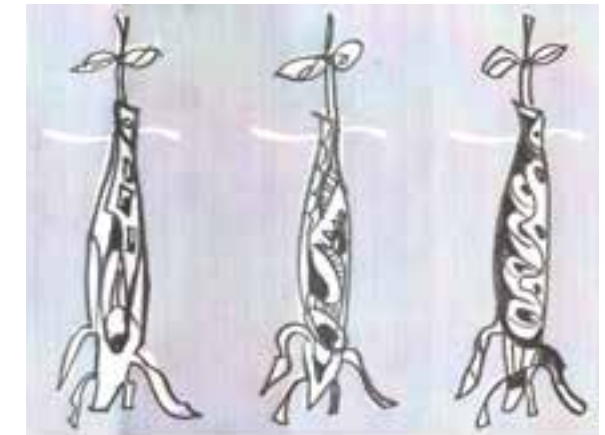
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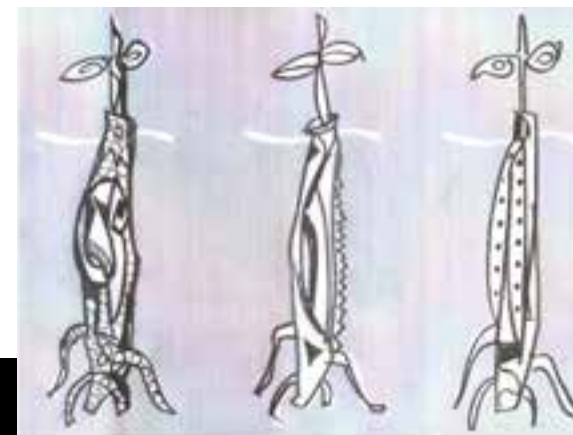
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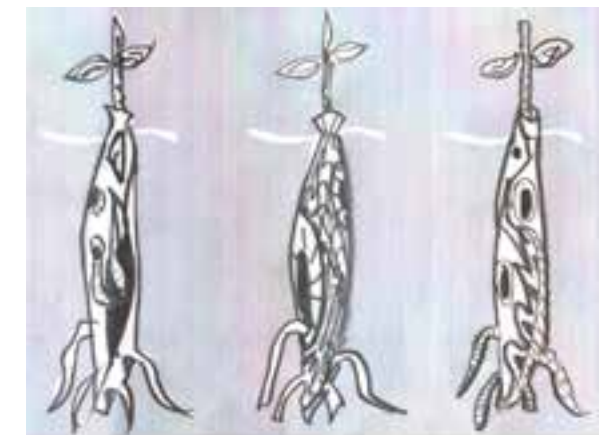
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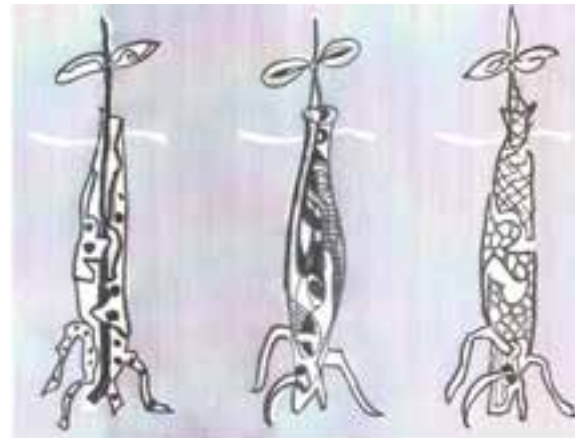
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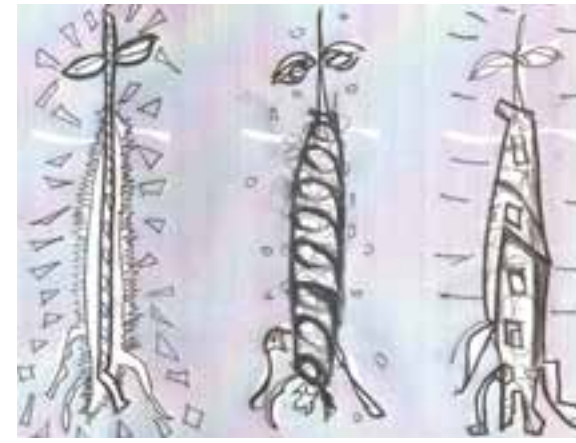
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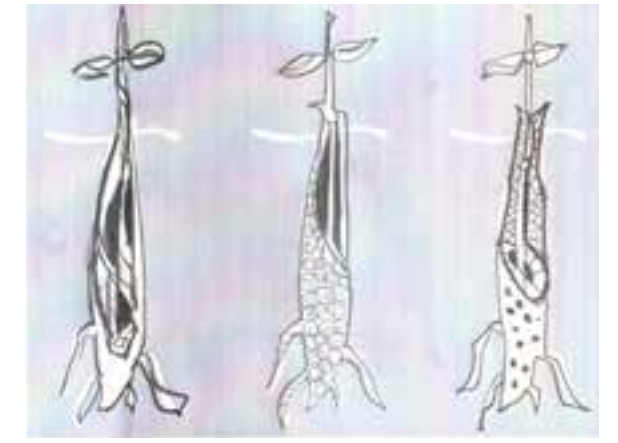
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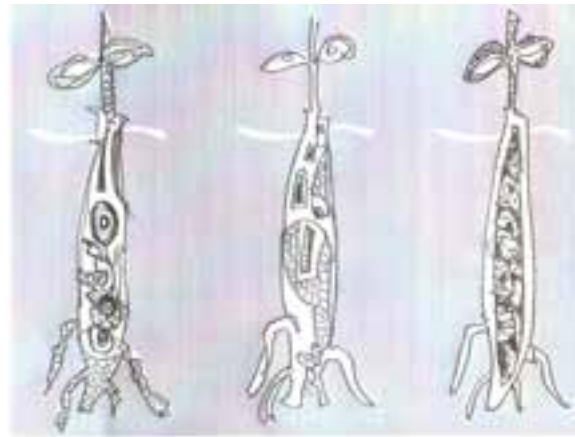
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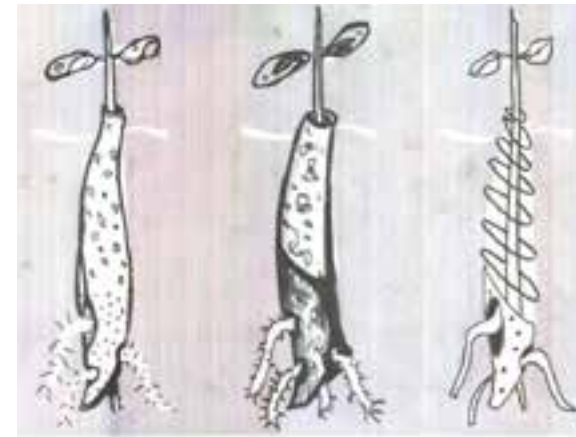
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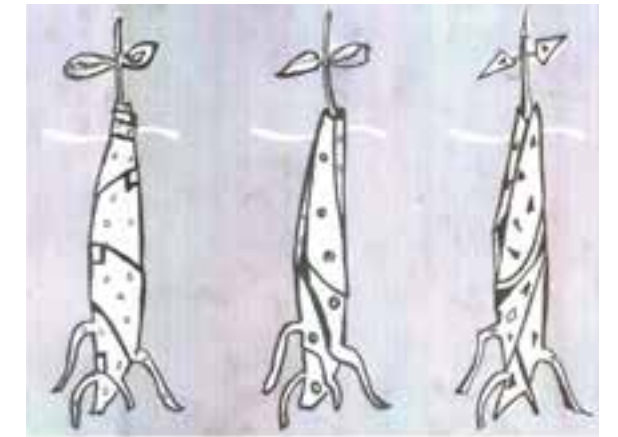
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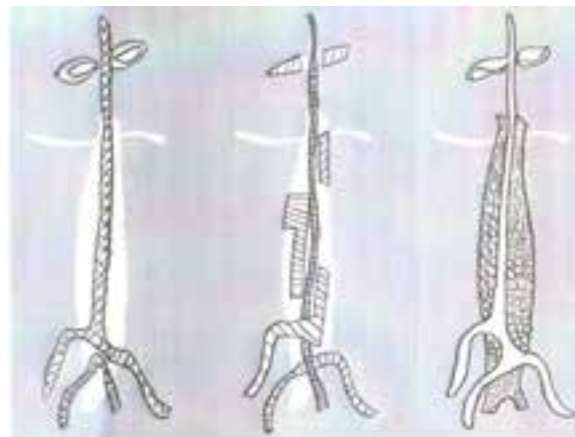
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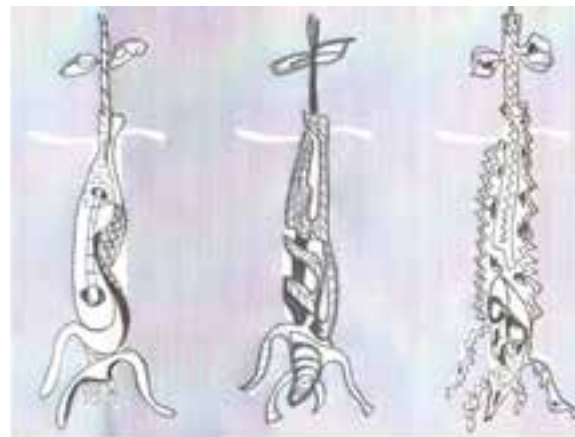
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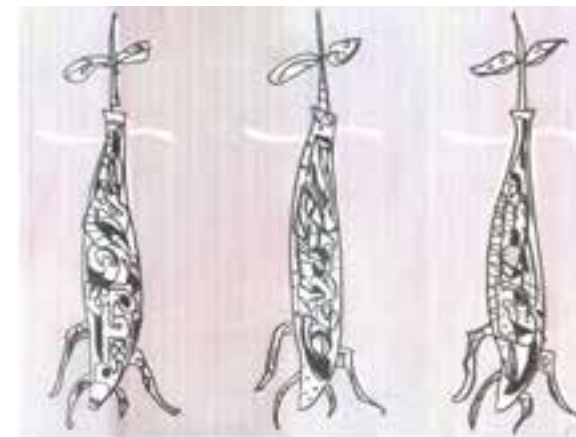
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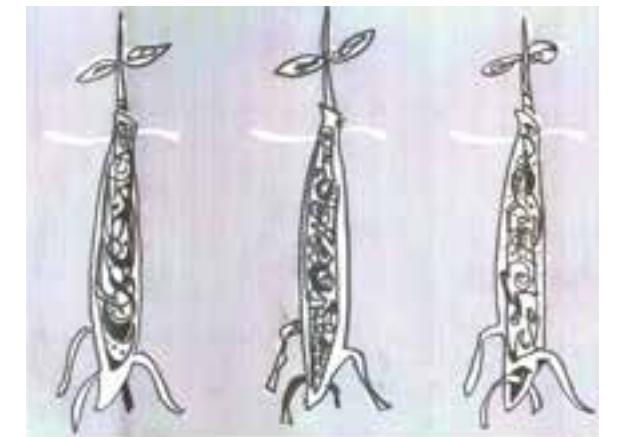
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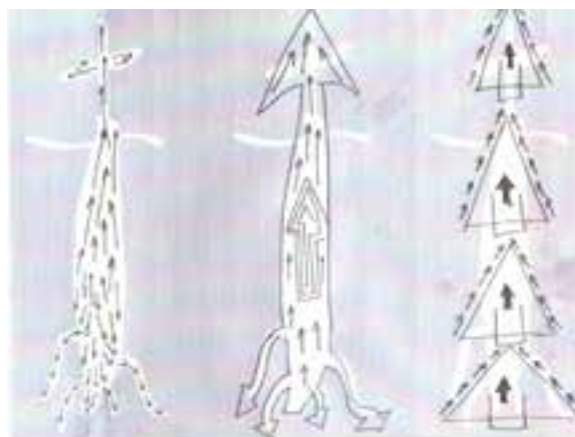
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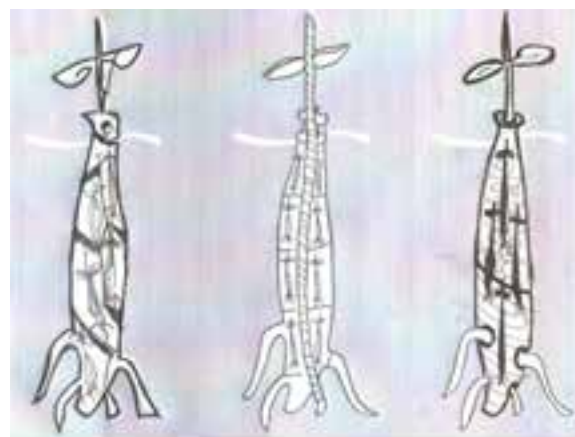
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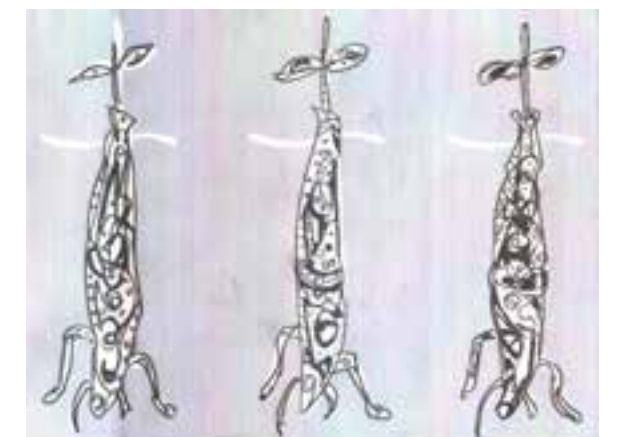
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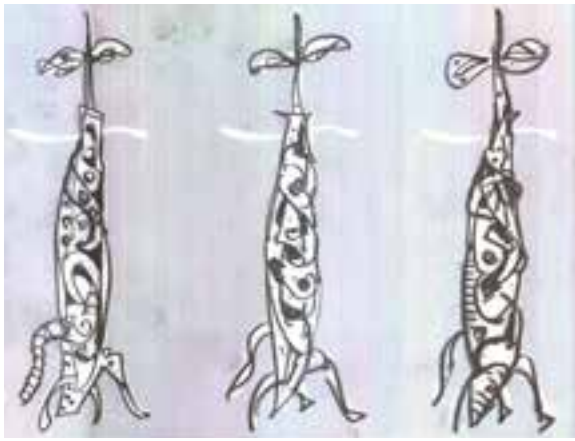
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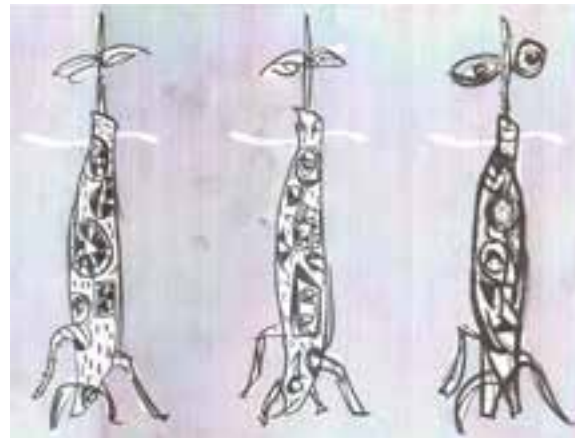
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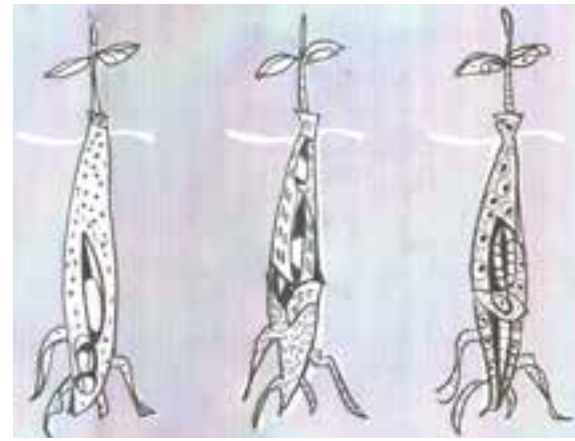
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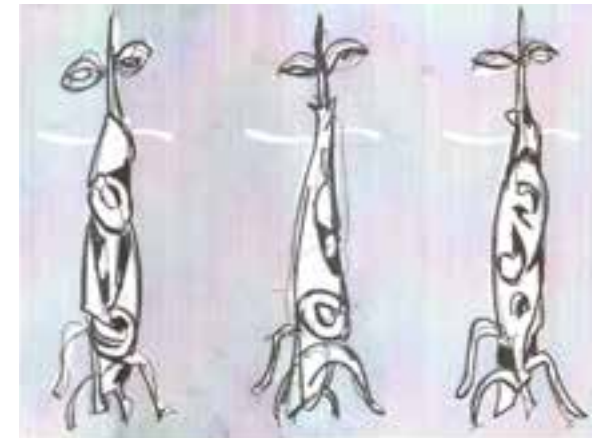
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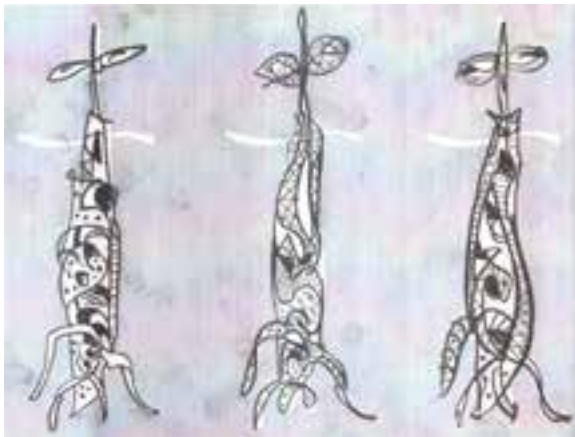
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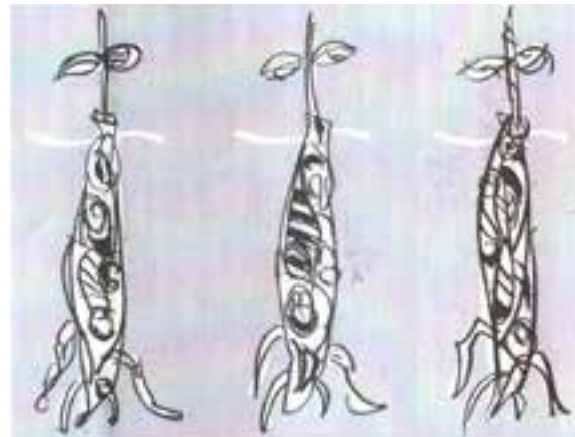
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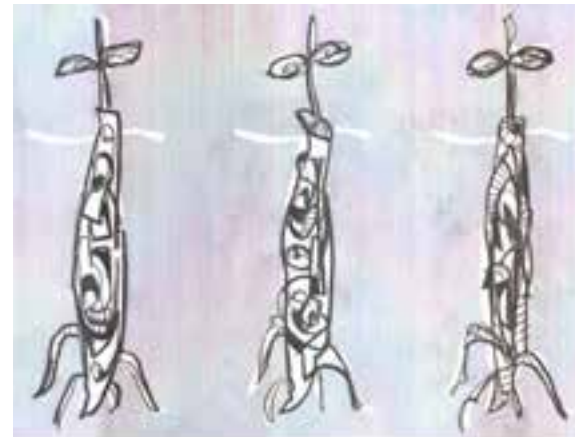
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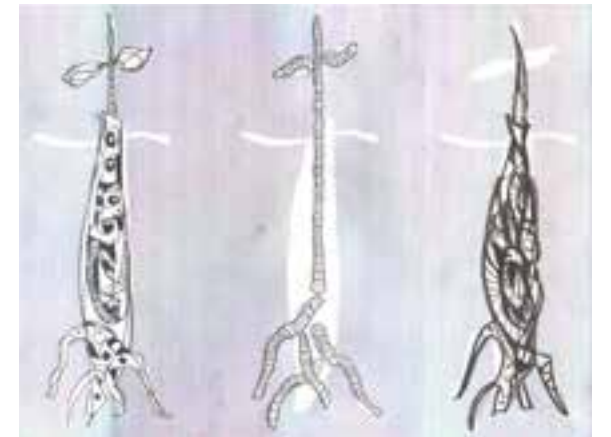
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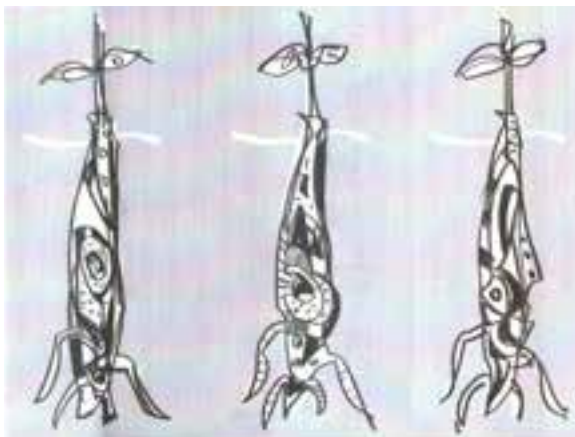
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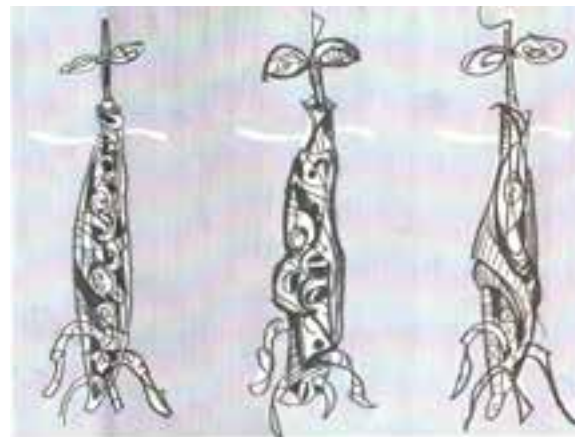
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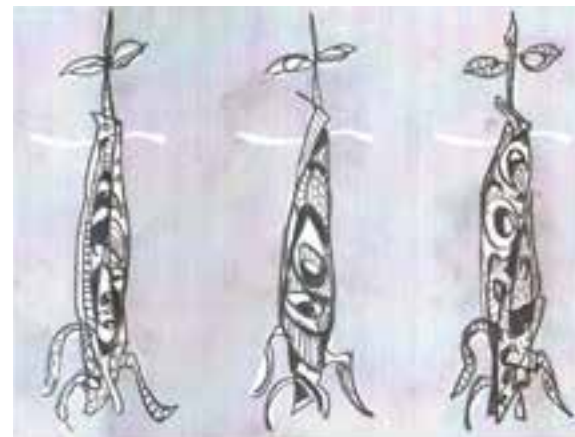
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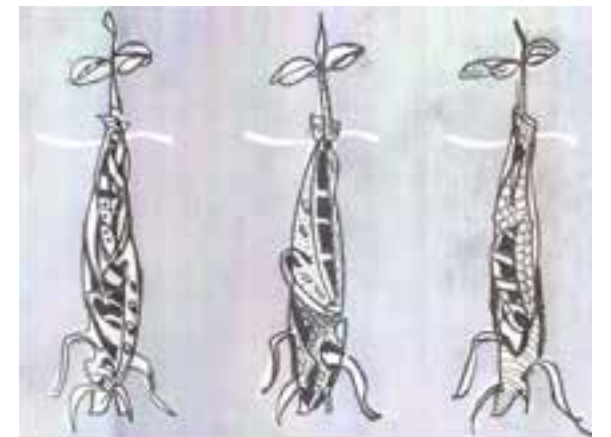
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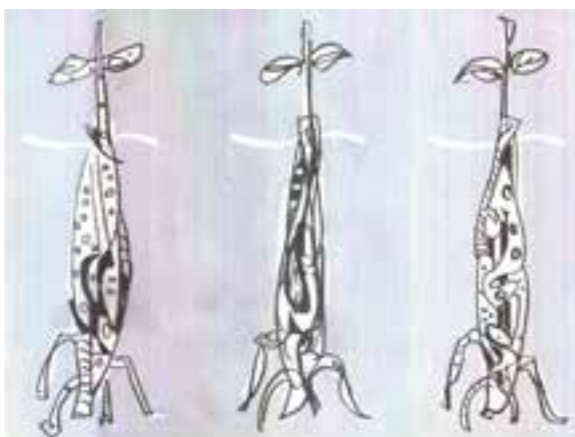
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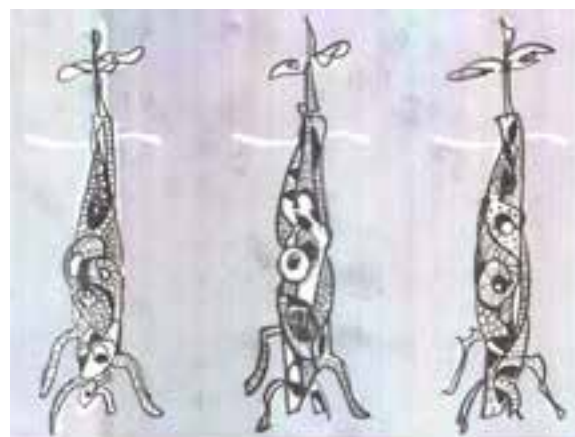
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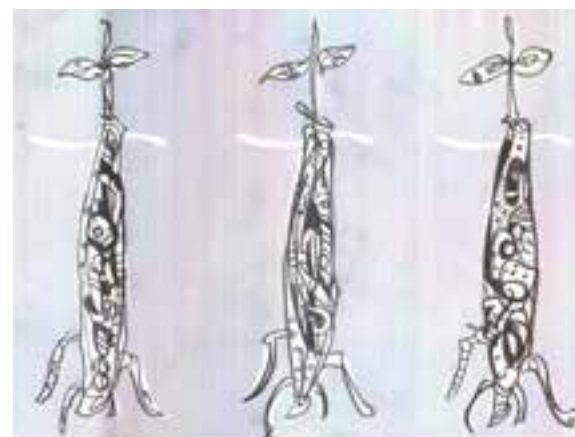
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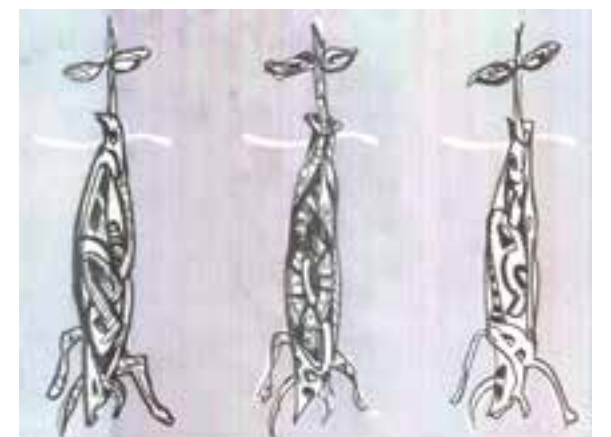
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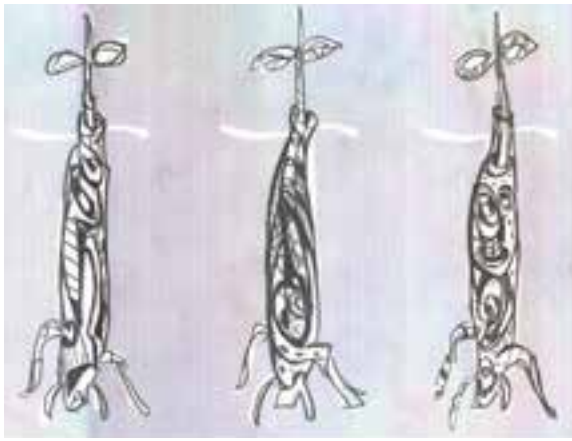
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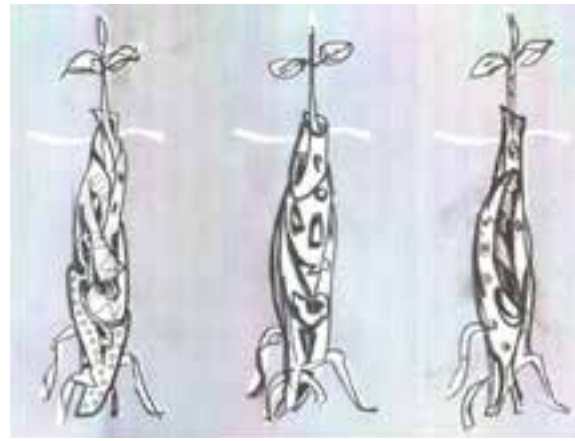
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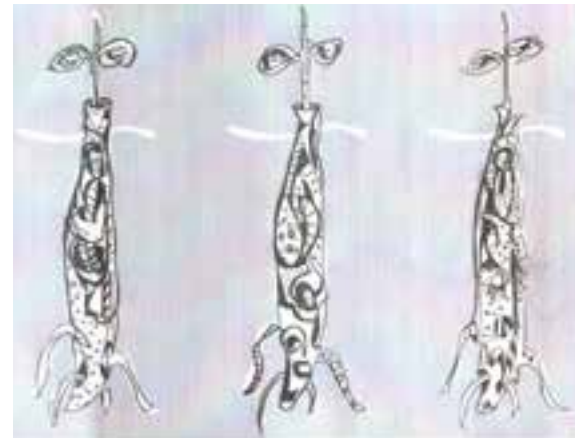
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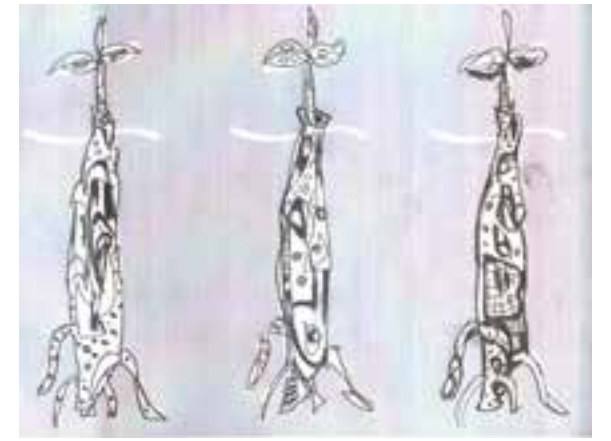
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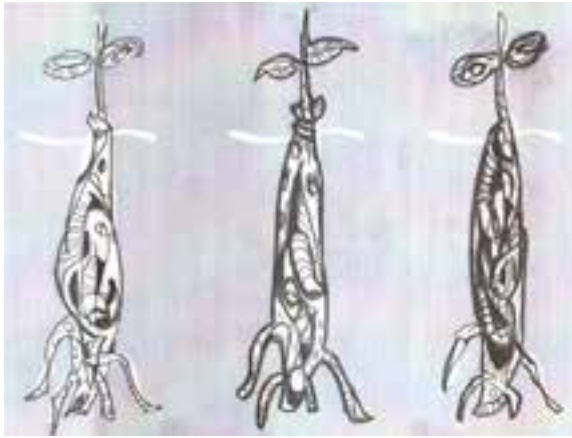
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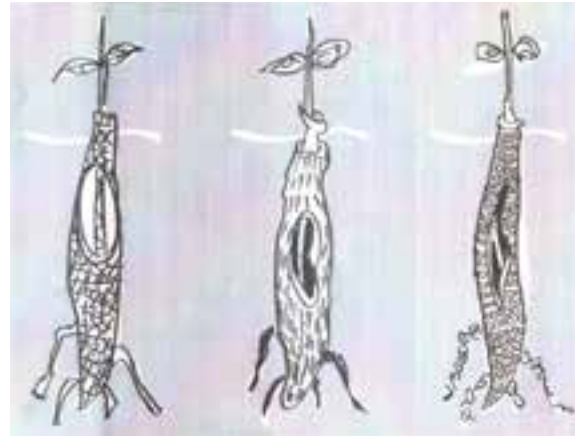
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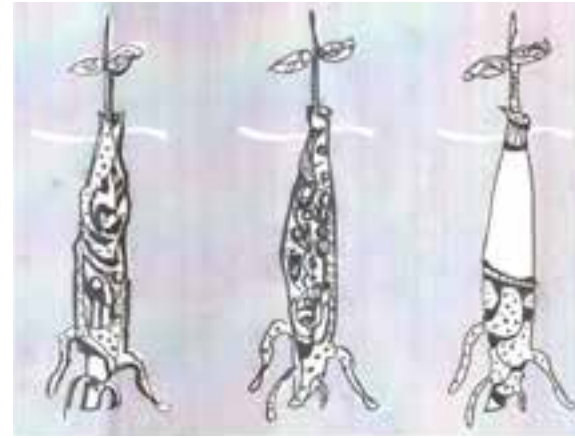
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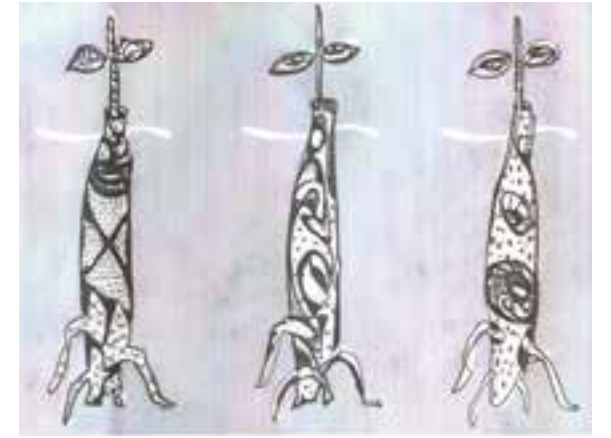
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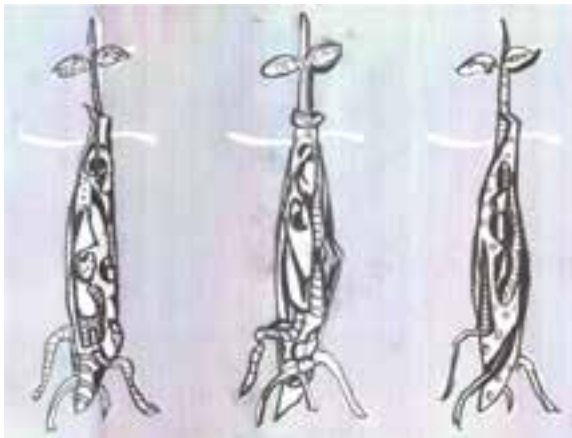
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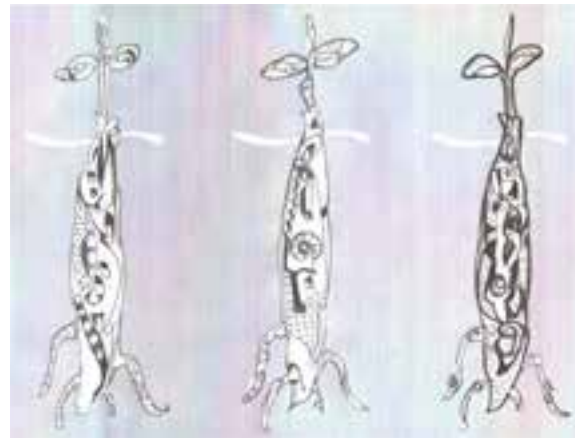
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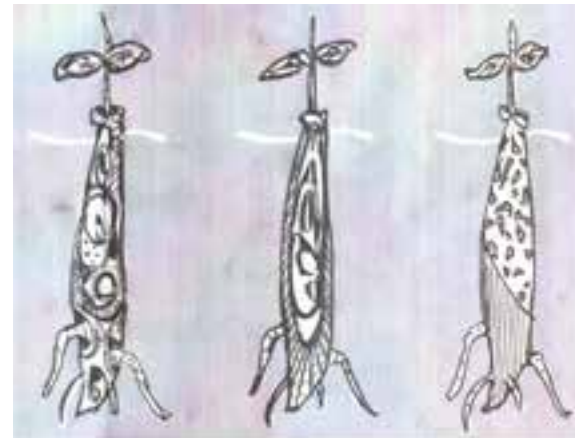
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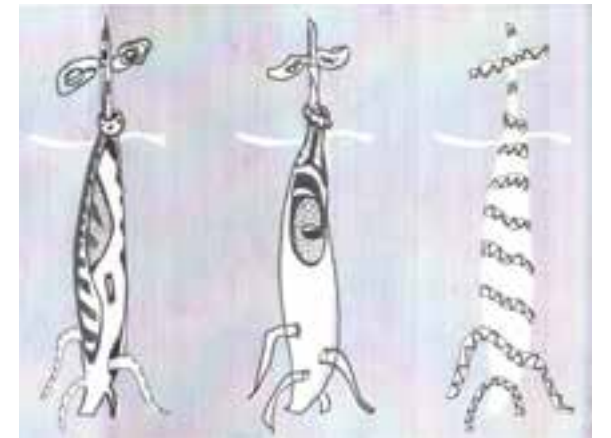
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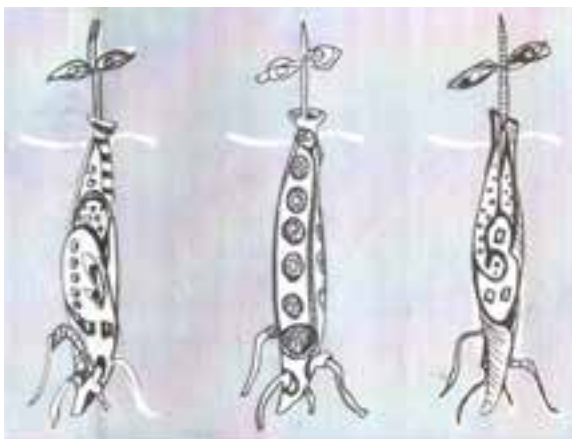
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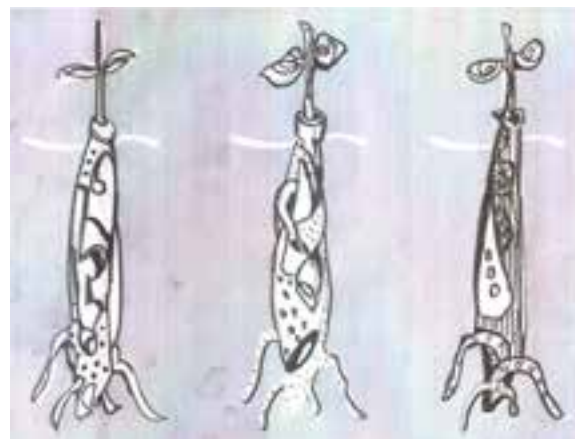
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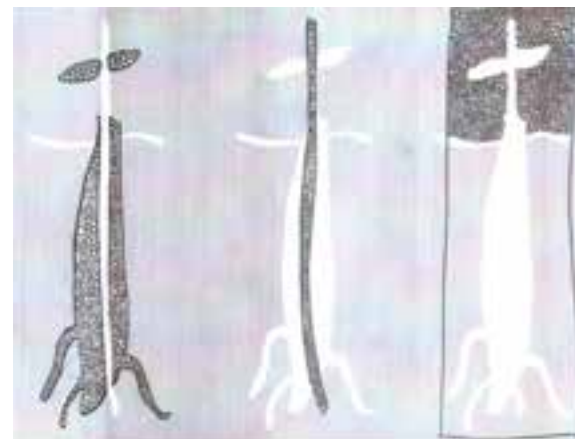
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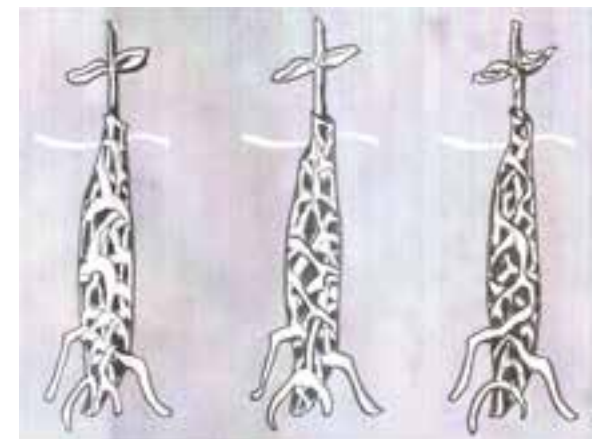
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Xavier Cortada is an artist, Professor of Practice at the University of Miami Department of Art and Art History and Artist-in-Residence at Pinecrest Gardens, where his studio, gallery and socially engaged art practice are based. Cortada's work is intended to generate awareness and action towards issues of global climate change. Using art's elasticity to engage others, Cortada educates and inspires community members to work and learn together to solve our community's problems.

The artist has created art installations at the North and South Poles to address environmental concerns at every point in between. He has developed numerous collaborative art projects globally, including peace murals in Cyprus and Northern Ireland, child welfare murals in Bolivia and Panama, AIDS murals in Geneva and South Africa, and eco-art projects in Hawaii, New Hampshire, Taiwan, Holland and Latvia.

Cortada has also been commissioned to create art for the White House, the World Bank, Pinecrest Village Hall, Miami City Hall, Miami-Dade County Hall, Florida Botanical Gardens, Port Everglades, the Florida Turnpike, the University of Miami, the Miami Art Museum, the Museum of Florida History and the Frost Art Museum.

His work is in the permanent collections of the Perez Art Museum Miami (PAMM), the NSU Museum of Art in Ft. Lauderdale, the Whatcom Museum, the Phillip and Patricia Frost Art Museum, the MDC Museum of Art + Design and the World Bank.

Cortada, born in Albany, NY and raised in Miami, holds undergraduate, graduate and law degrees from the University of Miami.

To learn more, visit www.cortada.com.



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