

RE-EVALUATING THE AESTHETICS AND POLITICS OF PLANTS



Plants are not rigid symbols; they are dynamic actors in cultural, political and economic processes. Depending on the historical context, the meanings they carry can be altered, recharged or transformed into resistant narratives. The interdisciplinary conference *The Many Meanings of Flora* critically re-examines the aesthetics and politics of plants, scrutinising their role in art, literature, science and society.

Throughout history, plants have shaped cultural narratives, functioning as projection surfaces for ideas of power, belonging, nature and civilisation, and becoming symbols of resistance, home, exile, knowledge, remembrance and oblivion. In art and literature, for example, they have

been used as allegories of life and transience, while in colonial contexts they have become tools of exploitation and control. Botanical knowledge production was closely linked to imperial interests, contributing to the consolidation of Eurocentric systems of knowledge. Current debates demonstrate the growing importance of plants in political struggles, ecological movements and postcolonial discourse. However, these meanings are not fixed but are subject to constant re-evaluation depending on the political, social or economic climate. This conference focuses on the multifaceted meanings of plants, placing particular emphasis on viewing them as active elements in historical and contemporary negotiation processes.

An interdisciplinary conference organized by Anita Hosseini & Isabel Kranz moderated together with Lisa Marie Heuschober, Maria Inês Lopes Vales & Lorenzo Zerbini

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University of
Applied Arts Vienna
Auditorium
Vordere Zollamtsstraße 7
1030 Vienna

Thursday DECEMBER 11TH 2025

15:00 Anita Hosseini and Isabel Kranz
Welcome and Introduction

15:30 BOTANICAL MEMORIES

Clelia Coussonnet
*There is no Silence in the Earth –
A Curatorial Approach to Botanical Politics*

Bethan Hughes
An Elastic Continuum

Khadija von Zinnenburg Carroll
Longer Botanical Drifts

17:15 Coffee break

17:45 **DISCUSSION**

18:30 Break

19:00 **KEYNOTE:** Maria Thereza Alves
*Seeds of Change. Memory of Earth, Plants,
and Other Histories*

Friday DECEMBER 12TH 2025

10:00 **RETHINKING BOTANICAL EPISTEMOLOGIES**

Emilia Terracciano
Invasives in the Home/at Home: The Beautiful, the Bad, and the Ugly

Silke Felber
*“Willi” and the Sensory Afterlives of Austrian Botanical Imperialism:
The Case of *Amorphophallus titanum**

11:15 **DISCUSSION**

12:00 Lunch break

13:30 **ECOLOGIES OF FASCISM**

Nanna Heidenreich
Nature in and out of Place? Border Fascism and Plant Imaginations

Sonya Schönberger
Forest and War

14:45 **DISCUSSION**

15:30 Coffee break

16:00 **QUEER BOTANICAL ECOLOGIES**

Banu Subramaniam
Migrant Ecologies: Plant Worlds and the Queer Afterlives of Empire

Joela Jacobs
“Moves to Naturalization”: The Aesthetics and Politics of Queer Plants

17:15 **DISCUSSION**

18:00 Break

18:15 **CONCLUDING REMARKS**