

Ecologies, Collections, and Contested Heritage (online, 15 Sep 24–10 Jun 25)

online, Sep 15, 2024–Jun 10, 2025

Deadline: Jul 15, 2024

Vera-Simone Schulz

Ecologies, Collections, and Contested Heritage: (Un-)Natural History and Italian Colonial Ambitions in Africa.

September 2024 – July 2025.

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Concept and organization: Jermy Michael Gabriel and Vera-Simone Schulz.

The online seminar series "Ecologies, Collections, and Contested Heritage: (Un-)Natural History and Italian Colonial Ambitions in Africa" seeks to bring together historians of art and architecture, historians of science, experts in literary studies, critical museology, critical heritage studies, post-colonial theory and decolonial critique, artists, curators, and cultural practitioners to examine the environmental aspects related to the history of Italian colonialism and military occupation in Africa. The discussions center on diverse issues including the built environment, urban landscapes, agricultural projects, concepts and practices of natural history, epistemologies, museum collections, the role of archives and counter-archives and past and present endeavors to challenge them.

The series will pay particular attention to the role of different media regarding environmental issues such as photography and film. It will shed new light on the role of the environment in urban spaces, on plants in relation to architecture, squares, promenades, and on spaces of commoning. It will interrogate specimens in natural history collections in Italy, Libya, in the Horn of Africa, and beyond, issues of conservation, the curation and display of botanical and zoological collections, and it will discuss questions of restitution and reparation. Challenging dominant narratives, confronting contested histories, and amplifying voices that have been historically silenced, the online series will both examine the history and legacy of the toxic heritage of Italy's colonial endeavors, and it seeks to unearth stories of resistance and resilience.

Through collaborative efforts among scholars and artists, the online series aims to navigate the complexities of Italy's colonial past, acknowledging both its legacies of oppression and resistance. By reframing the Italian colonial archive through a critical and ethical lens as well as by emphasizing and highlighting local contexts and perspectives in North Africa, in the Horn of Africa and beyond, the series seeks to foster meaningful engagement with these histories and to contribute to broader conversations around the complex intersections between cultural and natural heritage, environmental and social justice.

The online series is linked to the project and series “Decentering Italian Colonial Heritage” and to the broader project “Epistemologies of Conviviality: Temporalities and Aesthetics of the Built Environment across the Horn of Africa and Beyond”, funded by the Volkswagen Foundation and directed by Elyas Abdulahi, Akram Elkhailifa and Vera-Simone Schulz in collaboration with Jermy Michael Gabriel.

Meetings will take place once a month between September 2024 and July 2025 with online presentations. Please send us abstracts of 350 words and brief bios for paper proposals for this online series by July 15 to decenteritaliancolonialherit@gmail.com

Reference:

CFP: Ecologies, Collections, and Contested Heritage (online, 15 Sep 24-10 Jun 25). In: ArtHist.net, Jun 10, 2024 (accessed Jul 18, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/42100>>.