

Taking Root: Conserving Trees and/as Heritage (Vienna, 29–30 Oct 26)

University of Vienna, Oct 29–30, 2026

Deadline: Mar 30, 2026

Alisa Santikarn

Taking Root: Conserving Trees and/as Heritage.

While in recent years, the rhizomal networks of fungi have inspired heritage researchers seeking to engage with the entanglements of their subject, before then, it was trees that dominated as the totemic natural metaphor for thinking and writing about heritage. Yet despite the low-hanging fruit of easy references to ‘deep roots’, ‘solid trunks’ and ‘flowering branches’ indicating everything from intergenerational transmission, to the health of a particular form of heritage, we have found little by way of a direct exploration of trees as both subjects and objects of heritage, and how this framing impacts their conservation.

In this conference, we invite papers that reconsider and reposition trees as heritage in a variety of frames and scales, including:

- Monuments. Individual trees as monuments (e.g., Guernica tree, Sycamore gap, memorial trees)
- Materiality. Conserving tree species (e.g., baobabs, eucalyptus, oak trees, olive trees, etc.) and types of wood as heritage
- Forests. Groups of trees as/and heritage (e.g., spirit forests, forest-based heritage practices, women’s forests)
- Metaphors. Thinking with trees, their microcosms and entangled root systems, trees as metaphors for thinking about heritage and conservation
- Intersections. Trees and conservation at the intersection of nature, culture, and art.
- Violence. Ecocide, ethnocide, genocide and the uprooting of trees

We also invite papers that seek to disrupt binary categorisations of nature/culture and consider the integrated needs as they relate to issues of conservation, management, and theorisation of trees and/as heritage. On this note, we ask that papers engage directly with overlaps between trees/heritage/conservation/art. We welcome multidisciplinary approaches and also encourage submissions for both traditional and non-traditional conference formats.

Proposals of no more than 300 words should be sent to Alisa Santikarn (alisa.santikarn@univie.ac.at) by 30 March 2026. Decisions will be sent in April.

This conference is organised as part of the ERC-funded Global Conservation: Histories and Theories project at the University of Vienna, in collaboration with the Cambridge Heritage Research Centre at the University of Cambridge.

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Reference:

CFP: Taking Root: Conserving Trees and/as Heritage (Vienna, 29-30 Oct 26). In: ArtHist.net, Feb 25, 2026 (accessed Apr 15, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/51826>>.