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

University of Vienna, Oct 29–30, 2026

Franziska Wasserberg, Wien

The Global Conservation: Histories and Theories Project (GloCo) at the University of Vienna, in partnership with the Cambridge Heritage Research Center at the University of Cambridge, invites you to attend the international conference Taking Root: Conserving Trees and/as Heritage, taking place on 29–30 October 2026 at the University of Vienna, Austria. The conference is free to attend, but registration is required.

Bringing together scholars, practitioners, artists, and filmmakers from across disciplines, the conference approaches trees as living heritage at the intersection of nature, culture, memory, and politics. Across topics ranging from sacred forests and Indigenous knowledge to climate change, colonial extraction, ecological violence, and artistic practice, the conference asks how trees shape – and are shaped by – histories of conservation, identity, and belonging.

The two-day program features panels on trees and art, sacred trees and forests, arboreal memory, environmental justice, more-than-human heritage, and the role of trees in archives, monuments, museums, and contemporary art. The program also includes a film screening and discussion, bringing together academic, artistic, and experimental approaches to the relationships between trees, communities, and conservation.

The conference welcomes multidisciplinary perspectives and different modes of engaging with trees as heritage, considering how conservation practices might account for the cultural, ecological, material, and political lives of trees.

Location:
Seminar Room 1, Department of Art History
Garnisongasse 13, Hof 9
University of Vienna

For further information, including paper abstracts and the full program, and to register, please visit:
https://www.heritagestudiesvienna.com/news-events/conference-taking-root-conserving-trees-andas-heritage

If you have any questions, please contact Alisa Santikarn at alisa.santikarn@univie.ac.at.

Full Program

29 October 2026
9–9.30am Registration
9.30–10am Opening Remarks

10–11.15 Panel 1: Trees, Conservation, and Art (Chair: Noémie Étienne, University of Vienna, GloCo Project)

- We have the same needs as the tree: Mapuche art and poetry and the struggle for heritage and conservation
Juan Carlos Guerrero Hernandez (Independent Scholar)
- Rising From the Ash(es): The Afterlife of a Dead Tree
Kirsty Robertson (Western University)
- Fragrant Afterlives: Regimes of Extraction and Arboreal Memory Politics in Taiwan
Freda Fiala (University of Arts Linz)

11.15–11.45 Break

11.45–1pm Panel 2: Sacred Trees and Forests (Chair: Alisa Santikarn, University of Vienna, GloCo Project)

- Forest as Heritage: Sacred Commons, Precarious Landscapes, and the Politics of Conservation
Güldem Baykal BÜYÜKSARAÇ (Istanbul University)
- Between Spirits and Enlightenment: Sacred Trees as Living Religious Heritage in Thailand
Jirathorn Chartsiri (College of Religious Studies, Mahidol University, Lecturer)
- The heritage of medicinal and sacred trees in the anglophone Caribbean
Hannah McGurk (PhD Candidate, University of Cambridge)

1–2.15pm Lunch

2.15–3.30pm Panel 3: Tree Memories – Archives and Monuments (Chair: Colin Sterling, University of Amsterdam)

- A living monument in São Paulo: the Árvore das Lágrimas (the Tree of Tears)
Roseli Maria Martins D'Elboux (Mackenzie Presbyterian University, School of Architecture and Urban Planning, Assistant Professor)
- Imaging and Imagining Larrkardiy: The living heritage of Australian boab trees
Ursula K Frederick (University of Western Australia)
- The Mosasaurs and the Mammoth Tree: Sonic Heritage, Sensory Embodiment, and Situated Knowledge in Maastricht's Natural Heritage Landscape
Jaime (Jay) Simons (Maastricht University, The Plant (Playground and Laboratory for New Technologies)

3.30–3.45pm Short Break

3.45–4.45pm Film Screening and Q&A
Pseudoacacia: Managing Invasive Trees as Natural and/or Cultural Heritage in Post-Industrial Landscapes
John Garner (University of Tsukuba) and Heather Brown (Independent Filmmaker)

6.30pm Dinner for speakers

30 October 2026
9–10.30am Panel 4: Conserving Forests beyond the Nature/Culture Divide (Chair: Ayesha Fuentes, University of Cambridge)

- Ancestral Forests: Rethinking Trees as Living Heritage in the Mijikenda Kayas
Dennis Kioko Mbandi (Kenyatta University, MA Archaeology Student)
- Rethinking the pollard: changing attitudes and ecological continuity in Epping Forest
Andy Froud & Thomas Boughton (Epping Forest, City of London, UK. Biodiversity Officer & Campaigns Officer)
- Living heritage: Biocultural conservation on spice cultivation in the Maluku Archipelago, the heartland of Clove and Nutmeg
Muhamad Iko Kersapati & Mohamad Atqa (The Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Indonesia)
- Dalit Ecology and the Conservation of Living Heritage: Trees, Memory, and Environmental Knowledge in Dalit Literature
Manvi Singh (PhD, Department of Indian Languages and Literary Studies, University of Delhi, India)

10.30–11am Break

11–12.15pm Panel 5: Trees and Violence (Chair: Dacia Viejo Rose, University of Cambridge)

- Olive Trees Weep: Cultural Genocide and Limits of International Law
Aysu Gül Yılmaz (Bilkent University, Research Assistant)
- Pillars of Life and Death: Trees, Museums and Epistemic Violence
Colin Stirling (University of Amsterdam, Assistant Professor of Heritage, Museums and the Environment)
- Canadian Maples, Austrian Pines and French Acorns at the Vimy Memorial
Layla Renshaw (Kingston University London; Associate Professor in Forensic Science) and Esther Breithoff (Senior Lecturer at the Carena Institute Birkbeck)

12.15–1.30 Lunch

1.30–3pm Panel 6: Conserving Types of Trees – More-than-human Narratives (Chair: Isabel Kranz, University of Applied Arts, Vienna)

- Uprooting the Abundant: Tangerine Trees as Heritage in Post-Earthquake Antakya
Irem Aydemir (PhD Candidate in Sociocultural Anthropology at UC Davis)
- The Palm Trees of Esfahk: Shifting Meanings, Livelihoods, and Practices of Living
Atefeh Mousavi (Independent Researcher in Critical Heritage Studies), Behnaz Motarjem (Independent Researcher in Earthen Architecture) & Mohsen Mehdizadeh (Research Collaborator from Esfahk, Iran) [Online Presentation]
- Thinking about heritage through chestnut trees in Las Médulas landscape (Spain)
Nekbet Corpas Cívicos (Institute of History-Spanish National Research Council, Specialized Research Technician)
- Uneven Roots: Urban Space, Vegetal Life, and the Story of a Ficus Macrophylla in Palermo

Giulia de Spuches (Università di Palermo, Full Professor) and Gabriella Palermo (Department of Cultures and Society, University of Palermo - Researcher RTT)

3–4pm Closing Discussion and Reflection (Chair: Marie Louise Stig Sørensen, University of Cambridge)

Reference:
CONF: Taking Root: Conserving Trees and/as Heritage (Vienna, 29-30 Oct 26). In: ArtHist.net, Sep 15, 2026 (accessed Nov 24, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/54189>.