

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The artist wishes to thank the many co-conspirators, collaborators, interlocutors, funders and companions of the works presented in this exhibition, which are too numerous to all list here. Special thanks for their support of Reading Wood (Backwards) and Living Wood as well as the exhibition itself: Luis Catarino, Renato Chorão, Ana Couto, Maria Cristina Duarte, Ana Godinho, Bruno Leitão, Ricardo Lima, Marta Lourenço, Maria de Brito Matias, Maria Emília Martias, Margarida Mendes, Branca Mories, Faustino Oliveira, Ana Teixeira Pinto, Teresa Quilho, João Rapazote, Fazal Rizvi, and Direcção das Florestas e da Biodiversidade de STP, Universidade de Lisboa (ULisboa), Instituto de Investigação Científica Tropical (IICT) & Museus da ULisboa, Museu Nacional de História Natural e da Ciência (MUHNAC), as well as the whole team at Galerias Municipais de Lisboa.

URIEL ORLOW

Galeria
Avenida da Índia

GALERIAS MUNICIPAIS – GALERIA AVENIDA DA ÍNDIA
Avenida da Índia 170, 1300-299 Lisboa

Tuesday to Sunday: 10 am–1pm and 2pm–6pm
Free entrance

Guided tours by appointment
mediacao@galeriasmunicipais.pt

www.galeriasmunicipais.pt

Curated by
Bruno Leitão

25.01–
27.04.2025

MEMÓRIA COLATERAL

Supported by:



The exhibition “Collateral Memory” by Uriel Orlow proposes an in-depth exploration into Historical Memory and Restitution, concepts that the artist has been grappling with for over two decades. Restitution, in Orlow’s practice, goes beyond the simple return of objects or artefacts, asserting itself as a collective responsibility to reintegrate marginalized memories into history. In the artist’s work this manifests itself in interventions that recover forgotten knowledge and propose new ways of narrating historical events, by listening to the resonances of suppressed histories in the present and fostering an ethic of memory and reparation.

In English, the term “collateral” is often associated with the expression “collateral damage”, broadening the idea of damage beyond the immediate and visible. This interpretation aligns with Orlow’s approach: by illuminating events that remain on the margins of hegemonic narratives, Orlow proposes an expansive reflection on historical repair and responsibility.

Working with video, drawing, photography, print, sound and installation, the artist presents projects that span his artistic career and multiple geographies. Orlow’s practice examines the legacies of European violence, forms of erasure, and modes of memorialization beyond traditional monuments and historical narratives. He focuses on recuperating memory in the present and the material world, whether embedded in architecture, plants, gesture, or other latent archives. The exhibition traces an arc from his early work in the early 2000s on Holocaust memory, rooted in his family history and his perspective as a third-generation survivor, to his engagement with one of the largest loots of modern times – the Benin Bronzes stolen by the British in 1897, which he was face to face with as an artist living in London. His Benin Project from 2007 highlighted not only the lack of serious discussion on restitution at that time but also the need to examine the European colonial gaze. Finally, the artist’s more recent work explores ongoing entanglements between Europe and its former colonies, focusing on plants and gardens as more-than-human witnesses of colonial and apartheid history in South Africa, the continuing epistemic violence through imposed European languages in Guatemala, and the roots of our extractive relationship with natural resources in the wood library of the former colonial garden in Lisbon, where he has been living for the last few years.

By questioning dominant narratives and recovering marginalised knowledge and transforming absences into driving forces for critical reflection the works denounce the structures of oppression that continue to violate both memory and knowledge. By linking the cultural destruction of the Holocaust to colonial epistemicide, Orlow’s work invites us to consider the resonances of, and responsibilities vis-à-vis different processes of cultural

4

What Plants Were Called Before They Had a Name (Guatemala), 2019–2021

Projections on 5 overhead projectors, HD Video, colour, mono channel sound, 11’53”
Courtesy of the artist

Ajq’ij / Spiritual Guides: Marco Juarez, Luis Morales Choy, Don Domingo, Felipe Mendoza, ASECSA midwives, Maria Cristina, Ezequiel Tot Maas, Dora Soberanis, Margarito Córdoba, Lidia Carlota Méndoz Matías

5

The Benin Project, 2007

5A

A Very Fine Cast (110 Years), 2007

Prints on Somerset paper, 29.7×42 cm

5B

The Visitor, 2007

HD video, colour, mono channel sound, 15’58”

Voice: Sade Popoola

5C

Lost Wax, 2007

Video installation with 7-channel sound, Hantarex screens, variable duration
Courtesy of the artist

6

Reading Wood (Backwards), 2022

Wood sculptures, photographs and wallpaper (variable dimensions), sound, 6’45”
Courtesy of the Portuguese State Contemporary Art Collection

Woodwork: Jacky Cavallari/Le Foubourg Atelier, Lisbon, Portugal
Voice: Fabiola

7

Living Wood, 2025

7A

Eu já andava na floresta com o meu avô e o meu pai, e agora vou sozinho, 2025
4K video, colour, sound, 77’27”

With: Jacky Pereira

7B

Echoes of Green, 2025

Pencil drawings on paper, 21×29,7 cm

7C

Timber Testimonies (São Tomé), 2025

Timber Testimonies (São Tomé), 2025
Acrylic with UV print (10.5×14.85 cm), roots, bark and other plant materials from São Tomé, dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist

8

The Memory of Trees, 2016–2017

Wild Almond Tree, Cape Town
Milkwood Tree, Cape Town
Lombardy Poplar, Johannesburg

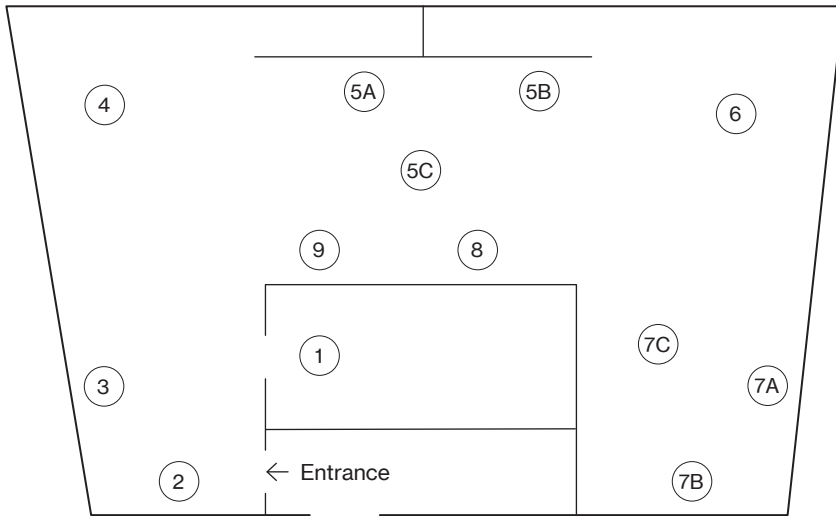
Black and white photographs mounted on aluminium, 120×150 cm
Courtesy of the artist

9

The Fairest Heritage, 2016–2017

Video, 5’12”
Courtesy of the artist

With: Lindiwe Matshikiza



①

1942 (Poznan), 1996/2002
SD Video, 5'50", color, sound
Courtesy of the artist

Voice: Morton Klein, Szeged, Hungary

②

Double Vision (Native Plants), 2013

Wild Amaryllis
Syrian Bryony
Oleander

Hand-painted black and white silver gelatine
prints, 29×24 cm
Courtesy of the artist

③

Mangoes of Goan Origin (An Archive),
2024–2025

1. *Afonso/Hebrew*
2. *Araújo/Arabic*
3. *Barreto/Devanagari*
4. *Carreira/Kannada*

5. *Dourado/Malayalam*

6. *Elavayangan/Tamil*

7. *Fernandin/Farsi*

8. *Godgo/Gumurkhi*

9. *Hilário/Sinhala*

10. *Irmão Xavier/Bangla*

11. *Jerónimo/Urdu*

12. *Nicolau Afonso/Nepali*

13. *Koita/Gujarati*

14. *Monteiro/Marathi*

15. *Oliveira/Odiya*

16. *Papel/Greek*

17. *Rebello/Syriac*

18. *Salgada/Sephardic Ladino*

19. *Tanque/Telugu*

20. *Xavier/Portuguese*

4-colour lithographs with silkscreen overlay,
28×28 cm

Courtesy of the artist

Printmaking: Jayasimha Chandrashekar,
Bangalore, India

erasure, and points to the need for critical reflection and engagement that crosses temporalities and geographies.

1942 (Poznan), focuses on a synagogue in Poznan, Poland, which was turned into a swimming pool during the Nazi regime. The video deals with the historical memory of spaces which, at first glance, may seem neutral to uninformed visitors, but which bear deep and silent marks of the traumas of the Holocaust.

Double Vision (Native Plants), is a series of stereoscopic photographs taken in Palestine before partition in 1948, reflecting the two distinct but obviously identical nomenclatures of native flora found in Israel/Palestine – ghostly and premonitory signs of land claims, appropriation and destruction.

Mangoes of Goan Origin (An Archive) investigates colonial entanglements in Goa through a series of engravings of Goan mango varieties with Portuguese names, reintroducing the cultural diversity erased during the colonial period through the initials of the names in 20 different languages reflecting the commercial and cultural world of the 16th century and highlighting the role of mangoes in the Portuguese economy and diplomacy, while questioning the official monocultural archive.

What Plants Were Called Before They Had a Name, is an investigation into epistemicide in Guatemala. Confronting a publication on Mayan medicinal plants from the 1970s by the Guatemalan Indigenous Institute which only include plant-names in Spanish, the artist invited Mayan spiritual guides to re-introduce the original names in Mayan languages as a gesture of cultural and linguistic restitution.

The Visitor depicts the artist's audience with Oba Erediauwa, the king of the Kingdom of Benin between 1979 and 2016. The conversation between the European visitor and the royal court focuses on collective memory and the right to restitution of the Benin bronzes plundered by the British in 1897 and now present in hundreds of museums and private collections in the West.

Lost Wax documents the work of artists in the traditional brass foundry district of Benin City (Nigeria), where they use the lost wax technique (*cire perdue*) and recycled metal from the West to create new unique artifacts which are based on the objects looted by the British in 1897, but aren't reproductions, thus challenging the division between "authentic" objects and "copies" and the complex relationship of these works with the global market.

The Very Fine Cast reproduces descriptions of the so-called ‘Benin Bronzes’ in institutions in Europe and the United States since they were plundered from 1897 to 2007. These descriptions taken from auction catalogs, books and exhibition labels create an archive of the Western gaze.

Reading Wood (Backwards) asks: “What happens when the forest becomes a library, serving Western knowledge systems and extraction economies?” Focusing on the legacy of colonial logging in Africa and the bioprospecting missions and collection of plant samples by the wood library of the Tropical Botanical Garden in Lisbon for scientific analysis and commercial exploitation. The installation reconnects microscopic images of wood structure with the tree itself. By asking: “What would restitution to nature mean?”, the work intertwines colonial pasts and contemporary environmental crises as a result of centuries of extractivism.

Echoes of Green, is a set of pencil drawings, rubbings of foliage from the tropical forest in São Tomé, incomplete indexes, ghostly witnesses of the past and the present, of destruction and survival.

Timber Testimonies (São Tomé), Reproductions of labels of all the wood samples that were sourced from trees in São Tomé by the Xyloteca and exhibited there, anticipating possible uses of the wood and thus its extraction from the primal forest in São Tomé.

I already walked in the forest with my grandfather and father, and now I’m going alone shows a walk in the rain forest of São Tomé with Jacky Pereira, who collects plant material for medicinal use. We witness a sustainable non-extractive use of the forest, where use does not imply degradation and destruction but healing and care.

The Memory of Trees is a series of black and white, negative photographs of trees as witnesses to violent histories, from their colonial use to contemporary resistance, linking biodiversity and historical memory:

Wild Almond Tree, Cape Town

This almond tree in Cape Town was planted in 1660 by the first Dutch settlers to prevent the Khoikhoi and their cattle from entering the vegetable garden planted to refuel the ships of the Dutch East India Company.

Milkwood Tree, Cape Town

It was by this tree, now in a suburb of Cape Town, that in 1510 the Portuguese explorer Dom Francisco de Almeida was attacked and killed (along with his party) by the Khoikhoi who were taking revenge for cattle raids, abductions and extortion. The tree later became known as the Old Slave Tree of Woodstock because it was there that Slave masters sold humans there and “disobedient” slaves were hanged from its branches. It was also here that, after their defeat in 1806, the Dutch signed the capitulation conditions, transferring control of the Cape to the British.

Lombardy Poplar, Johannesburg

This Lombardy poplar served as a landmark for fugitives from the apartheid security forces to find the home of the anti-apartheid activist Ruth Fischer, thus saving their lives.

The Fairest Heritage is based on and interferes with archival films made in 1963, on occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden in Cape Town, documenting of the garden and the celebrations with their “national” dances, pantomimes of colonial conquest and visits from international botanists; The films’ protagonists – the scientists and visitors – are all white; the only Africans featured are labourers. Considered neutral, flowers and plants were excluded from the boycott until the late 1980s and so botanical nationalism and flower diplomacy flourished unchecked at home and internationally. The films have not been seen since 1963 and were found by the artist in the cellar of the library of the botanical garden. Orlow collaborated with actor Lindiwe Matshikiza who puts herself and her body in these loaded pictures, inhabiting and confronting the found footage and thus contesting history and the archive itself.