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Displaying Violence and the Violence of Display:

Durable Modern/Colonial Worldviews and the Production of Alterity in a Botanical Garden in Lisbon, Portugal[1]

Abstract: In a way that challenges the nature/culture divide which marks Western thought, this article examines how a botanical garden in Portugal was and is implicated in different yet intertwined modes of violence, given the histories it is connected to and current museological strategies. The focus of the analysis is the Tropical Botanic Garden of the University of Lisbon in Belém, which contains living and non-living collections derived mainly from its twentieth-century histories. At that time, it was used as the Colonial Garden and it housed part of the Exhibition of the Portuguese World, which included a display of actual people from the colonies. The narratives produced there today reflect an effort to confront some of these histories, while revealing the ongoing durabilities of modern/colonial worldviews.

Keywords: theoretical museology, colonial durabilities, implication, alterity, decoloniality

Introduction: the poetics and politics of (living) museums

This article explores how a botanical garden in Portugal, through its colonial histories and current museological strategies, was and is implicated in perpetuating certain modes of violence. The *Jardim Botânico Tropical* (JBT) or Tropical Botanic Garden of the University of Lisbon in Belém integrates a large living and non-living collection that results mainly from its twentieth-century colonial histories. I view this

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garden as a living museum, due to its character (an enclosed space with collections), its functions (a non-profit institution aimed at preserving, researching, and presenting its collections to the public), and because it operates as a narrative and epistemic space. The adjective *living* is used here literally to refer to this museum's collection of natural elements, and figuratively to emphasise the continuously changing character of the physical space and its narratives.

Ongoing discussions about how European countries deal with their colonial pasts have put significant pressure on institutions like museums to explore their connections to these histories and the links between the stories they tell and the communities they claim to represent. Crucial to this development has been an increasing focus within cultural theory (especially since the 1980s) on questions of representation, that is, on how meanings are created through display, while recognizing that knowledge, its production and deployment, are political.[2] This is particularly salient in ethnography and anthropology museums created in colonial times, where histories and practices of acquisition, collection, and display of objects are now often examined in view of the ideas they sought to convey about the alleged superiority of Europe,[3] and their role in the production of alterity.[4] More recently, there is a growing realization that the institution of the museum is itself a colonial inheritance, and calls to "decolonize" these spaces are therefore extending beyond former "colonial museums" in the narrowest sense.[5]

European colonialism was an inherently violent process, wherein violence operated and manifested itself in different and sometimes elusive ways.[6] Yet colonialism is not a finished event; rather, it had enduring effects on and continues to inhabit our world in countless ways, from modes of thinking to geopolitics. My understanding of the durabilities of colonialism and the modalities in which they operate and manifest themselves is largely informed by decolonial thinking. Also known as decoloniality, this movement contends that the contemporary (neoliberal) world order and enduring ideas about the superiority of Western civilization and knowledge were justified and reinforced by European imperialism and colonialism.[7] At the core of

2 Sharon Macdonald, Expanding Museum Studies: An Introduction, in: Sharon Macdonald (ed.), A Companion to Museum Studies, Massachusetts/Oxford/Victoria 2006, 3.
3 Katja Kaiser, Exploration and Exploitation. German Colonial Botany at the Botanic Garden and Botanical Museum Berlin, in: Dominik Geppert/Frank Lorenz Muller (eds.), Sites of Imperial Memory, Manchester 2015, 237.
4 Dan Hicks, The Brutish Museums, London 2020, 182.
5 Csilla Ariese/Magdalena Wróblewska, Practicing Decoloniality in Museums. A Guide with Global Examples, Amsterdam 2022, 1–2.
6 Neel Ahuja, Colonialism, in: Stacy Alaimo (ed.), Gender: Matter, Michigan 2017, 239.
7 See Aníbal Quijano, Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality, in: Cultural Studies 21/2, 3 (2007), 168–178, and Walter Mignolo, The Darker Side of Western Modernity. Global Futures, Decolonial Options, Durham/London 2011.

decoloniality is thus the idea that there is no modernity without coloniality.[8] Decoloniality "offers an option for thinking and doing beyond the dominant paradigms" while challenging the hegemony of Western epistemology and its anthropocentrism and Eurocentrism.[9] This article aims to contribute to a complexification of our understanding of the modalities of modern/colonial violence and their durabilities in museological practices today.

In 2015, the JBT came under the administration of the National Museum of Natural History and Science (MUHNAC), part of the University of Lisbon. In 2019, a renovation project started, and one of its goals was to present the garden's collections and histories to visitors in new ways. As a living museum, the process of categorizing and describing this space and its collections works to (re)produce narratives and express certain worldviews that stem from particular epistemic traditions. This refers to what Henrietta Lidchi termed the "poetics and politics of exhibiting", which involves examining how narratives are constructed within and about a museum and its collections as an attempt to represent a particular reality, as well as questioning the role of museums in the (re)production of knowledge.[10] Besides articulating meanings about the world, museum displays are also powerful devices for the production and communication of knowledge, that is, ways of perceiving and understanding the world. In choosing what and who is made visible, and from which perspective or epistemic tradition something or someone should be understood, the work of museums reproduces existing power structures and is therefore necessarily political.

To view a garden as a museum is not an entirely new approach: the International Council of Museums (ICOM), for instance, included botanical gardens in its list of institutions that count as museums,[11] and some scholars have chosen a museological angle to examine these spaces.[12] Managers and curators of botanical gardens, however, tend to mark these as natural rather than cultural spaces, and partly for this reason, they are often not regarded as museums. Botanical gardens are usually presented to visitors as situated out of time, decontextualized from historical processes, wherein specimens are described as part of the natural world, from the allegedly objective and universal lens of science. Perhaps for this reason, botanical gardens, much like zoos and natural history museums, often escape postcolonial or decolo-

8 Walter Mignolo, What Does It Mean to Decolonize?, in: Walter Mignolo/Catherine E. Walsh (eds.), On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis, Durham 2018, 105–109.

9 Rolando Vázquez, Vistas of Modernity, Amsterdam 2020, xvii.

10 Henrietta Lidchi, The Poetics and Politics of Exhibiting Other Cultures, in: Stuart Hall/Jessica Evans/Sean Nixon (eds.), Representation, London 2013, 120–191.

11 François Mairesse, The Definition of the Museum. History and Issues, in: Museum International, 71/1, 2 (2019), 154.

12 For example, Evie Evans, Cultivating Colonialism, MA thesis, University of Amsterdam 2021.

nial scrutiny.[13] Yet these spaces and their collections and the representation of the natural world are firmly rooted in the colonial past and coloniality, as I will show in this article.[14]

Referring to ethnographic museums, Wayne Modest argues that it is precisely their "entangled relations with the colonial past – of extraction and violence, of appropriation and misrepresentation – that recommend these institutions as powerful sites for thinking through colonial entailments in the present".[15] I would extend this argument to include exhibition spaces connected to nature, since these "help us learn not only about biological life and human history, but also the colonialist and capitalist logic that still governs our everyday lives".[16] Through this article, I hope to contribute to ongoing efforts to ensure that spaces like botanical gardens are more substantially taken into account in critical museology debates.

I start by sketching the garden's histories, more specifically, the period between 1912 and 1974, when it was used as the Colonial Garden, and 1940, when it housed the Colonial Section of the Exhibition of the Portuguese World, which included a display of actual people from the then colonies. These two sections conclude with reflections on ways in which these histories relate to modes of synchronic and diachronic violence. This is followed by an analysis of musealization strategies implemented in the garden since 2020, to examine how the narratives and knowledges (re)produced are themselves implicated in and perpetuate forms of harm.

While dealing with different modes of violence, this article does not aim to equate or compare them. Rather, it shows how and reflects on why different colonial histories are dealt with differently in the way they are narrated today. I argue that the museological strategies employed at the JBT simultaneously reflect an effort to confront *some* of its colonial histories, while revealing the durable effects of modern/colonial worldviews and epistemologies in the act of display. The research presented is based mainly on visual and textual narrative analysis carried out between 2018 and 2022. The data was collected through several site visits and three semi-structured

13 Naomie Gramlich/Lydia Kray, (Post-)Colonialism and the Botanical Gardens at Potsdam, in: Poco.lit, 2020, https://pocolit.com/en/2020/07/13/post-colonialism-and-the-botanical-gardens-at-potsdam/ (30 December 2021); Caroline Drieënhuizen/Fenneke Sysling, Java Man and the Politics of Natural History, in: Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde 177 (2021), 291.

14 See also Caroline Drieënhuizen/Marieke Borren, The Coloniality of Natural History Collections, in: Locus, 2022, https://locus.ou.nl/locus-dossier-doorwerkingen-van-natuurhistorische-kolonialiteit/inhoudsopgave/ (23 February 2022).

15 Wayne Modest, Introduction. Ethnographic Museums and the Double Bind, in: Wayne Modest/Nicholas Thomas/Doris Prlic et al. (eds.), Matters of Belonging: Ethnographic Museums in a Changing Europe, Leiden 2019, 12.

16 Sria Chatterjee, The Long Shadow of Colonial Science, in: Noema (11 March 2021), https://www.noemamag.com/the-long-shadow-of-colonial-science/ (12 August 2021).

interviews with staff of the MUHNAC in 2018, 2020, and 2021, as well as informal talks and email correspondence.

Violent implications of a colonial garden

The JBT is located in the so-called Monumental Area of Belém, one of the most visited neighbourhoods of Lisbon, the capital of Portugal, a country with a long colonial history. After the independence of Brazil in 1822, colonial ambitions turned to Africa, and from the end of the nineteenth century, Portugal invested in occupying what corresponds today to Angola, Mozambique, Guinea Bissau, Cape Verde, and S. Tomé and Príncipe.[17] At the time, Portugal also controlled Goa, Damão, Diu, Macao, and Timor – small enclave territories in Asia.[18] The Portuguese colonial project and the Salazar and Caetano dictatorships ended with the Carnation Revolution of 25 April 1974, following more than 10 years of bloody liberation wars in Africa.[19] Despite these histories and a growing willingness to address them today (often driven by activists of African descent), the dominant narrative about Portugal's history and national identity is still characterized by its Eurocentrism and a denial of colonial violence,[20] best encapsulated in the glorifying and Eurocentric narrative of the "Voyages of Discovery".[21] With its monuments – such as the Monument to the Discoveries –, statues, and other references to the "Discoveries", Belém represents an important site of memory of Portugal's imperial project.

Occupying an area of 7 hectares, the JBT is characterized by its tropical flora and structures, statues and paths dated to different periods. Although it has existed as a garden at least since the seventeenth century, its current character and much of its collection date to the twentieth century. The Colonial Garden was established through a 1906 Royal Decree that approved the reorganization of the colonial agricultural services. This decree established the creation of two training courses (Economic Geography and Colonial Crops, and Colonial Technology and Husbandry),

17 Pedro Aires Oliveira, O Ciclo africano, in: João Paulo Oliveira e Costa/José Damião Rodrigues/Pedro Aires Oliveira (eds.), História da Expansão e do Império Português, Lisbon 2014, 343–345.

18 General references on Portuguese imperialism and later colonialism in Africa include Francisco Bethencourt/Diogo Ramada Curto, Portuguese Oceanic Expansion, 1400–1800, Cambridge 2007; Sanjay Subrahmanyam, The Portuguese Empire in Asia, 1500–1700: A Political and Economic History, Malden/Oxford 2012; David Birmingham, Portugal and Africa, Athens 2004; Miguel Bandeira Jerónimo, The 'Civilising Mission' of Portuguese Colonialism, 1870–1930, London 2015.

19 The Salazar and Caetano dictatorships, also known as the *Estado Novo*, were installed in 1933. The *Estado Novo* was preceded by a brief period of the *Ditadura Nacional* or National Dictatorship.

20 Miguel Cardina/Bruno Sena Martins, Memorias Cruzadas de la Guerra Colonial Portuguesa Y las Luchas de Liberación Africanas, in: Éndoxa 44 (2019), 113–134.

21 The "Discoveries" refer mainly to the maritime explorations of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

a Colonial Garden and a museum. This garden "aimed at experimental demonstrations for teaching, for the reproduction, multiplication, selection, and crossing of plants that are useful to provide to the colonies, to the study of crops and diseases of tropical flora, and to the practical training of the agronomic civil servants that wish to serve in the overseas territories".[22] This document shows how the production and teaching of botanical knowledge and of the "conditions of exploitability of our colonies", as well as the stimulation of agricultural production, were a priority of the government and part and parcel of Portugal's colonization policies.[23]

Initially established elsewhere, the Colonial Garden transferred to Belém in 1912. It was inaugurated in 1914, the same year when the main greenhouse was built. This required the existing garden to be modified to its new function, which involved gradually replacing much of the existing vegetation with tropical plants.[24] The Colonial Agricultural Museum was established in the Palace of Calheta (located inside the garden) in 1916 and inaugurated in 1929.[25] Until 1944, when the garden and the museum merged, they operated as separate institutions, albeit working together at the intersection of botany, economics, and colonial propaganda.[26] This museum closed in the 1980s,[27] hence it is not examined in this article.

Different authors have reflected on how Europe's pursuit of products, profits, and power – especially from the seventeenth century onwards – represented the ideological and structural context for the consolidation of botanical knowledge, which in turn played a crucial role in the further expansion and exploitation of empires.[28] Faced with many plants previously unknown in Europe, old classification systems

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22 MNMU – Ministério dos Negócios da Marinha e Ultramar, Decreto de 25 de Janeiro de 1906 approvando a organização dos serviços agrícolas coloniaes constante das bases anexas ao mesmo decreto, in: Diário do Governo, 21 (27 January 1906), https://legislacaoregia.parlamento.pt/Pesquisa/Default.aspx?ts=1 (27 September 2021), 75.

23 MNMU, Decreto de 25 de Janeiro de 1906, 67, 72.

24 António Carmo Gouveia, Jardim Botânico Tropical, in: Re-Mapping Memories (2021), https://www.re-mapping.eu/pt/lugares-de-memoria/jardim-botanico-tropical (10 October 2021).

25 Cláudia Castelo, Simulação e Dissimulação do Império Colonial Português em Belém, Lisboa (1940/2020): a Secção Colonial e o Jardim Botânico Tropical, in: Anais do Museu Histórico Nacional, Rio de Janeiro 54 (2021), 7.

26 Ibid., 8.

27 According to Ana Godinho, curator of the MUHNAC, this museum officially closed in 1992, yet it was already closed to the public during the 1980s (in conversation with author, 20 October 2021). Part of its collection was transferred to the Museum of Ethnology in Lisbon in the 1960s. However, most of its collection remains today in the Palace of Calheta, which includes ethnographic objects as well as botanical, zoological, and wood samples. There are plans to restore the Palace, yet it is not certain what will happen with the collections (Ana Godinho, in correspondence with author on 21 April 2022).

28 Zaheer Baber, The Plants of Empire: Botanic Gardens, Colonial Power and Botanical Knowledge, in: Journal of Contemporary Asia 46/4 (2016), 659–679; Londa Schiebinger, Plants and Empire. Colonial Bioprospecting in the Atlantic World, Cambridge/London 2007.

came into question.[29] In the eighteenth century, Carl Linnaeus was a central figure for devising the now widely used binomial system of classification of plants. Although often portrayed as the "coming of age of botany as a science", most developments in the eighteenth century and later were driven by the determination to uncover and extract the natural wealth of colonized spaces.[30] As Zaheer Baber argues, this search for a universal system to impose order on the variety of new plants was part of the process of rationalization of knowledge and the development of modern science and even modernity.[31] Western epistemic traditions that started developing then claimed a detachment of the knower from the known and built on Cartesian dualism that distinguishes body and mind to detach humans from nature, implying a superiority of mind and human above matter and nature.[32] Such worldview cannot be dissociated from the development of Judeo-Christian theology and Western Christianity in particular, marked by ideas of perpetual progress and man's dominance over nature.[33] Colonialism helped entrench this dualistic worldview.[34]

This epistemic tradition is problematic for several reasons. First, by developing the idea of the assumed superiority of Europeans and their knowledge in relation to nature and the alleged nature-bound instincts of colonized subjects, so-called Enlightenment thinkers created a justification for colonial expansion and the exploitation of natural resources and labour. This process involved the dismissal of other knowledges, wherein indigenous systems of cultivation were regarded as neither science nor agriculture.[35] Secondly, this worldview had tangible effects: since colonialism involved outsiders appropriating and using the land of others and (enslaved) labour in the service of power and profit, it implied coercion and the reshaping of worlds.[36] Thirdly, through Europe's 'civilising' mission and the erasure of other valid forms of knowledge, this epistemic tradition became hegemonic, generating discursive scientific practices that make it difficult to think otherwise.[37] In the words of Ailton

29 Jason T. W. Irving, Botanical Gardens, Colonial Histories, and Bioprospecting, in: Shela Sheikh/Uriel Orlow (eds.), Theatrum Botanicum, Berlin 2018, 75.
30 Schiebinger, Plants, 2007, 5.
31 Baber, The Plants, (2016), 672.
32 Achille Mbembe, Decolonizing Knowledge and the Question of the Archive, in: Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research (2015), http://wiser.wits.ac.za/system/files/Achille%20Mbembe%20-%20Decolonizing%20Knowledge%20and%20the%20Question%20of%20the%20Archive.pdf (10 September 2021).
33 Lynn White, The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis, in: Science 155/3767 (1967), 1203–1207.
34 Ahuja, Colonialism, (2017), 243.
35 Chatterjee, The Long, 2021.
36 Ahuja, Colonialism, (2017), 242–245.
37 Mbembe, Decolonizing, (2015), 10.

Krenak, "this call to civilization was always justified by the idea that there is a right way of being in the world, one truth".[38]

This modern/colonial worldview also led to other forms of violence. Although part of a longer genealogy, Walter Mignolo argues that during the Industrial Revolution in Europe and North America from the second half of the eighteenth century, the idea of nature was transformed into "natural resources" to be used for economic growth, thus prompting the "environmental catastrophe".[39] This capitalist view of nature endures today and has contributed to a process of "slow violence", which Rob Nixon defines as "a violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, […] that is typically not viewed as violence at all".[40] It is now widely accepted that European colonialism had a profound impact on the environment, significantly contributing to the current environmental crisis.[41] Ongoing extractive practices that resonate earlier patterns of colonial exploitation contribute to this crisis, and Portugal is no stranger to such ventures.[42]

Botanical gardens in Europe were deeply connected to colonial politics,[43] and scattered sources show us that the one in Belém was no exception. In 1915, a law decree transferred the garden from the Ministry of Public Education to the Ministry of the Colonies. This same year, cocoa, coffee, and other plants of 'economic interest' arrived at the garden from S. Tomé.[44] In 1927, the then director of the garden, José de Almeida, initiated a recurring column (*Memoranda do Jardim Colonial de Lisboa*) in an official magazine about the colonies (*Boletim da Agência Geral das Colónias*). This column was aimed at connecting Portuguese colonists engaged in agricultural activities overseas with the Colonial Garden, and at raising awareness amongst them of the "economic possibilities of flora".[45]

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38 Ailton Krenak, Ideas to Postpone the End of the World, Toronto 2020, 14.

39 Mignolo, The Darker Side, 2011, 12–13.

40 Rob Nixon, Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor, Cambridge/Massachusetts/London 2011, 2.

41 For example, White, The Historical Roots, (1967); William Beinart/Lotte Hughes, Environment and Empire, Oxford 2007; and IPCC, Climate Change 2022. Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability, IPPC Sixth Assessment Report, Cambridge 2022.

42 For example, João Vinagre/Filipe Nunes, Floresta Colonial: A Eucaliptização de Moçambique, in: Jornal Mapa 32 (2021), https://www.jornalmapa.pt/2021/11/27/floresta-colonial-a-eucaliptizacao-de-mocambique/ (20 November 2021).

43 For example, Andreas Weber, A Garden as a Niche: Botany and Imperial Politics in the Early Nineteenth Century Dutch Empire, Studium II/3 (2018), 179–190, and Lucile H. Brockway, Science and Colonial Expansion: The Role of the British Royal Botanic Gardens, New Haven/London 2002.

44 Rogério Dias Pereira, Apontamentos para a História do Jardim e Museu Agrícola do Ultramar. 1906–1970, Document from the Biblioteca do Jardim e Museu Agrícola do Ultramar, Lisbon 1993, 3.

45 José de Almeida, Memoranda do Jardim Colonial de Lisboa I, in: Boletim Geral das Colónias 3/27 (1927), 105–112.

Some of the botanists working in the garden participated in various missions to the colonies, which were promoted by the *Junta das Missões Geográficas e de Investigações Coloniais* (Board for Geographical Missions and Colonial Research), created within the Ministry of the Colonies in 1936. As Cláudia Castelo explains, "[a]longside geographical reconnaissance, a broader 'scientific occupation' was planned that would expand into new areas of knowledge, such as geology, botany, zoology, physical anthropology and ethnography".[46] In the 1950s and 1960s, the scope of this Board (which changed names several times throughout the years) was expanded to encompass research for public works (dams, roads, etc.), support for agriculture (coffee, sugar, cotton, etc.), and mining for foreign trade. Given that Portugal's colonies were dependent on agricultural activities, agronomy studies were considered particularly important for enabling the desired overseas development and intensification of white settlement.[47] José Sampayo D'Orey, director of the Colonial Garden from 1950, was involved in many of these missions: in 1942, he was part of the Botanical Mission to Mozambique (then as head botanist); in 1953 and 1954, he headed the Brigade of Forestry Studies to Guinea; and in 1960 he headed a campaign of the Mission of Forestry Studies to Angola.[48]

To the best of my knowledge, systematic research on the history of the Colonial Garden and its connection to colonial policies is yet to be carried out. However, the limited information available allows me to conclude that this site is implicated in the history of occupation and exploitation of Portugal's twentieth-century colonies.

Legitimizing violence through display: the colonial exhibition of 1940

In the late 1930s, the Colonial Garden was modified to house the Colonial Section of the Exhibition of the Portuguese World, which took place for a few months in 1940. Such exhibitions, aimed at emphasizing progress, were fairly common in Europe and North America during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Amongst them were the "colonial exhibitions", which promoted the exploitation and consumption of natural resources and products from the colonies and the duty to elevate the perceived inferior races, while showcasing the benefits of colonization.[49] The Exhibition of 1940 was probably the largest cultural happening of António de Oliveira Salazar's

46 Cláudia Castelo, Scientific Research and Portuguese Colonial Policy: Developments and Articulations, 1936–1974, in: História, Ciências, Saúde – Manguinhos 19/2 (2012).

47 Ibid.

48 Bruno D'Orei Slewinksi, As Minhas Pesquisas Sobre o Meu Avô Zé, in: Gazeta d'Orey 17 (2008), 4–5, https://www.dorey.pt/index.html#gazetas (28 December 2022).

49 Castelo, Simulação, (2021), 5.

dictatorship.[50] It included various sections located around the *Praça do Império* (Square of the Empire). New structures were created, such as the Monument to the Discoveries, and existing buildings were used, as a way of symbolizing the connection of the regime to the country's (imperial) past.[51]

One of the main "attractions" of the Colonial Section were 11 fabricated streets and "Villages and Dwellings of Indigenous Peoples" with around 138 people on display, to show the different ethnicities from Portugal's colonies (Fig. 1).[52] This section also included exhibitions on topics related to the colonies, such as products, the Catholic missions, and the cultures of the colonial subjects; as well as monuments, busts, tiles, and other elements intended to represent colonial subjects.[53] It also made use of the botanical collections of the garden, with the main greenhouse displaying "colonial species" such as vanilla, coffee, and papaya.[54] The Colonial Section aimed

Figure 1: One of the "indigenous villages", source: Casimiro dos Santos Vinagre, 1940, Collection Casimiro Vinagre, Exposition of the Portuguese World, Art Library of the Gulbenkian Foundation.

50 Patrícia Ferraz de Matos, As "Côres" do Império, Lisbon 2012, 206.

51 Ellen Sapega, Remembering Empire/Forgetting the Colonies: Accretions of Memory in and the Limits of Commemoration in a Lisbon Neighbourhood, in: History and Memory 20/2 (2008), 22–23.

52 Henrique Galvão (ed.), Exposição do Mundo Português (1940). Secção Colonial, Lisbon 1940, 284–285.

53 Matos, As "Côres", 2012, 212–215.

54 Galvão, Exposição, 1940, 284.

to project the geographic, human, cultural, and economic diversity of the empire inside the garden and museum, allowing "the visitor in two hours to cover the whole empire from Africa to the Pacific".[55]

Studies carried out by Cláudia Castelo and Patrícia Ferraz de Matos revealed information about the individuals on display, including some names and countries of origin, such as Manuel Bemano from Mozambique.[56] Although Matos highlights some episodes of resistance, such as the marriage of two African individuals without the permission of those in charge,[57] these "actors" were under tight control and were classified and treated differently depending on their country of origin or social status. In line with the Colonial Act of 1930,[58] those from Cape Verde, Macao, and India had a special status given their supposedly higher level of civilization.[59] Furthermore, although the different "actors" seemed to have been paid for their work, this payment was not equal.[60]

The practice of displaying humans was widespread between the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century, when hundreds of "ethnographic spectacles" were created in Europe, North America, and colonized spaces.[61] They often had two interconnected aims. Firstly, to develop "scientific" anthropological knowledge about colonial subjects, including measuring the bodies and strength of individuals, sometimes with the goal to understand which "types" were best suited for manual labour.[62] Secondly, to reinforce and normalize the idea of difference of the "other" and to show that the colonial endeavour was succeeding, therefore being worth the costs.[63] Such exhibitions constituted a form of representation that was deeply implicated in the production of alterity,[64] and they functioned as a "pedagogy of inequality, that is, as a discursive instrument to embed the dicta-

55 Anónimo 1940, as cited in Castelo, Simulação, (2021), 9.

56 Ibid., 14–15.

57 Matos, As "Côres", 2012, 226.

58 The *Acto Colonial* of 1930 was a constitutional law approved during the period of the *Ditadura Nacional* (National Dictatorship), which defined the modes of relationship between the metropolis and the Portuguese colonies. This document established a hierarchy of rights and duties between those born in the metropole and in the colonies, and amongst the colonial subjects, it distinguished between the "assimilated" and the "indigenous" (Ibid., 62–65). In 1933, this act was appended to the constitution of the *Estado Novo*.

59 Ibid., 62, 215–216.

60 Patrícia Ferraz de Matos. Power and Identity: The Exhibition of Human Beings in the Portuguese Great Exhibitions, in Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power 21/2 (2014), 220.

61 Walter Putnam, "Please Don't Feed the Natives": Humans Zoos, Colonial Desire, and Bodies on Display, in: FLS 39 (2012), 55–68, 56, 61.

62 Matos, As "Côres", 2012, 56–58.

63 Putnam, Please, (2012), 56.

64 Stuart Hall, The Spectacle of the "Other", in: Stuart Hall/Jessica Evans/Sean Nixon (eds.), Representation, London 2013, 260.

torship's racial ideologies in Portuguese society".[65] To a large extent, such pedagogical instruments worked, as seen in racist attitudes and institutional racism present in Portugal (and elsewhere) today.[66]

Regarding later "human zoos", such as the one in the Colonial Garden, Castelo points to their performative character: by placing individuals with customs closest to Western culture in the same space as "natives" that should become "civilized", these exhibitions aimed to render authentic and natural the racial and cultural hierarchies of the Portuguese empire.[67] Ultimately, displays of humans and the way they implicitly showed who got to display whom and how, and thus who controlled whom and which narrative, were undoubtedly the most harmful modes of racialized representation employed in colonial times. The Colonial Section thus represented a form of epistemic and direct harm, connected to other forms of violence – namely, forced labour and the "Indigenous Statute" imposed by the Colonial Act, which, especially between the 1930s and 1950s, constituted the "pillars of the Portuguese colonial power", following the intensification of exploitation and search for African labour.[68]

Although meant to be temporary, some of the elements of the Exhibition remain in the garden today – 14 busts as well as stone and tiled panels meant to represent African and Asian individuals, the Arch of Macao, the Colonial House, the Colonial Restaurant, and the Raw Material Pavilion. Between 1940 and 2019, the garden underwent limited material changes.[69] Yet changes in the name of the garden reflect important political shifts: for instance, in 1951, it became the *Jardim e Museu Agrícola do Ultramar* (Agricultural Overseas Garden and Museum),[70] which reflects the 1951 constitutional revision by which the colonies started being designated "overseas provinces", a reaction to increasing international pressure towards decolonization.[71] After 1974, the garden was renamed *Tropical* Agricultural Garden-Museum (later Tropical Botanic Garden), and fell under the administration of the governmental Institute of *Tropical* Scientific Research or IICT. In former colonial

65 Tiago Castela, Empire in the City: Politicizing Urban Memorials of Colonialism in Portugal and Mozambique, in: Nezar AlSayyad/Mark Gillem/David Moffat (eds.), Whose Tradition? Discourses on the Built Environment, London/New York 2017, 189.

66 See, for exemple, Joana Gorjão Henriques, Racismo no País dos Brancos Costumes, Lisbon 2018.

67 Castelo, Simulação, (2021), 13–14.

68 Fernando Rosas, História a História. África, Lisbon 2018, 41.

69 Programa de Recuperação e Beneficiação. Jardim Botânico Tropical, in: Universidade de Lisboa (August 2021), https://reabilitacao-jbt.ulisboa.pt (23 September 2021).

70 Jardim Botânico Tropical, in: Museus Universidade de Lisboa (n.d.), https://museus.ulisboa.pt/jardim-botanico-tropical (29 December 2022).

71 Conceição Casanova/Maria Romeiras, Legacy of the Scientific Collections of the Instituto de Investigação Científica Tropical, University of Lisbon: A Critical Review and Outlook, in: Conservar Património 33 (2020), 3.

empires, the adjective "tropical" often served as a post-colonial alternative to "colonial", revealing political shifts marked by institutional continuities.[72]

It is difficult to know exactly when and from where the current plants were added to the garden, which has to do with the character of this living collection. Yet it still contains many specimens from former colonized regions, such as banana trees and coffee plants, which can be seen as living traces of this garden's colonial histories. Along with the remains of the Exhibition of 1940 and a few other objects, they constitute the most significant part of the collection of the garden. Since the end of colonialism and the dictatorship in 1974 and until 2020, their presence only covertly recalled these histories. This space and its collection have since then been attributed new meanings through the implementation of musealization strategies, which I examine in the following pages.

Narrating nature: reinforcing hegemonic worldviews

The JBT integrated the MUHNAC in 2015, when the IICT became extinct and part of its work was transferred to the University of Lisbon. Its bad state of conservation due to years of limited funding led the University to initiate a large renovation project in 2019, the first phase of which ended in 2020.[73] Restoration of buildings is currently underway. Amongst other goals, it aimed to promote the histories associated with this space.[74] Until 2020, when the garden reopened to the public, the only information available were the names and regions of origin of some of the plants, presented on small plaques.

To understand how the garden operates to (re)produce narratives and knowledge about and through its histories and collections, I examine the museological choices and strategies that have since been implemented. During the reopening ceremony in 2020, Luis Ribeiro, the landscape architect of the project, stated that "we didn't want to erase any of the [garden's historical] phases, but rather make them more visible for the public".[75] This was done through an interactive mobile applica-

72 The history of the IICT goes back to the establishment of the *Comissão de Cartografia* (Cartography Commission or CC) in 1883, aimed at advancing scientific research and exploration of the colonies. The CC underwent several structural and name changes throughout its history, being followed by the Board for Geographical Missions and Colonial Research in 1936. After 1974, the IICT became a centre for scientific research and cooperation with members of the Community of the Portuguese Speaking Countries. See Casanova/Romeiras, Legacy of the Scientific Collections, (2020), 2–4.

73 Castelo, Simulação, (2021), 16.

74 Programa de Recuperação, August 2021.

75 Reabertura do Jardim Botânico Tropical (video on Facebook page), in: Universidade de Lisboa (27 February 2020), https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=501627073854863 (15 August 2021) (my translation).

Figure 2: The information boards at the entrance to the garden, added in 2020, photo by the author, 2021.

tion called "App JBT" launched in 2020, which expands on the information available *in situ*, presented through a new signboard system and walking routes (Fig. 2).

To examine the poetics and politics of display, I draw on Mieke Bal's approach of semiotic analysis to explore the gesture and discourse of exposition. This gesture functions as a mechanism whereby a first-person subject ("I") says (to a visitor) "look!", "that's how it is".[76] If the "look" element of the gesture involves the presence of an object, the "that's how it is" implies the authority of the person who knows and tells something about it, with the object working to reaffirm this discursive authority. This gesture of showing and telling is what Bal termed an act of epistemic authority.[77] According to Bal, it is the invisibility of the epistemic authority that reveals one of the greatest powers and dangers of exhibitions – their claims of truth.[78] In these spaces, "the viewer is framed, set-up, to see the objects in a particular, pre-ordained manner".[79] Several factors involved in the creation of exhibitions – such as the architecture of a museum, its location, texts, layouts – operate as epistemic devices by influencing how visitors understand particular objects and topics.[80]

76 Mieke Bal, Double Exposures. The Subject of Cultural Analysis, London/New York 1996, 2–3.
77 Ibid., 4.
78 Ibid.
79 Murat Aydemir, Staging Colonialism: The Mise-En-Scène of the Africa Museum in Tervuren, Belgium, in: Thamyris/Intersecting 9 (2008), 81.
80 Stephanie Moser, The Devil is in the Detail: Museum Displays and the Creation of Knowledge, in: Museum Anthropology 33/1 (2010), 22–32.

Like other kinds of museums, the JBT is surrounded by walls, which demarcate it from its urban surroundings. Before reaching the ticket booth, visitors walk past four signboards (Fig. 2). The second signboard from the left presents a selection of the garden's histories. Nothing is mentioned about the Exhibition of 1940 or the colonial context in which this garden operated, except that "[t]he prestige of the Colonial Garden led it to be invited to participate in several national and international exhibitions". Its importance is attributed to the fact that it "constitutes a place of high scientific interest". The third board indicates that one can follow the Botanic, Historical, or Inclusive Circuits (for people with disabilities). Through these thematic routes, the epistemic authority structures the garden's collection and hence ways of perceiving it along the worldview that views humans as separate from nature, as described above.

Also near the entrance, a world map was built into the ground, recalling the map placed in front of the Monument to the Discoveries in 1960, showing dates associated with the "Discoveries". The map in the garden, although different in character (it employs the Dymaxion projection) and aimed to emphasize the *tropical* character of the garden's collection,[81] seems to bring, by association, the narrative of the "Discoveries" into this space. This seems to be in line with Ribeiro's statement during the reopening ceremony: "this garden tells the story of Portugal and the Portuguese in the world".[82]

The introduction text on the JBT App includes essentially the same information as the signboards but adds that through its activities, this institution "organises scientific, educational, cultural and leisure activities aiming to preserve and enhance heritage, as well as disseminating specialised knowledge on tropical science and the history and memory of science and technology during the Discoveries, the major period of Portuguese expansion and colonization".[83] Besides exalting Portuguese imperialism, this narrative is not entirely accurate since the most visible part of the garden's history associated with "tropical science" dates to the twentieth century. The app also structures the garden into thematic routes: Trees You Must See, Garden With History, Birds (a trail that invites visitors to spot certain birds), and Biosensors (focused on lichens and bryophytes). Each route includes an introductory text that leads to a map which allows visitors to see their live location through GPS. Much like the plaques *in situ*, the authorship of the texts is not explicitly stated, conferring an authoritative character to the content. The maps include

81 Visita Guiada. Jardim Botânico Tropical (television programme), in: RTP Play (22 June 2020), https://www.rtp.pt/play/p7378/e479685/visita-guiada (13 September 2021).

82 Reabertura, (2020) (my translation).

83 Aplicação Jardim Botânico Tropical (mobile application), in: Universidade de Lisboa (n.d.), https://jbt.ulisboa.pt (25 March 2022).

points of interest, and a line indicating the path to follow, stimulating visitors to walk past specific objects.

The Trees You Must See route "includes some of the most important specimens in the garden. It features plants linked to economic interests, highlighting the role of the JBT in teaching Tropical Agronomy". Palm trees and other species are "ready to reveal all their stories". The route singles out 20 trees and for each it provides information such as scientific and common names, family and taxonomic notes, country/region of origin and uses. Simplified information can be found in the garden, on plaques that sometimes include a QR code that leads to the app. Using the *Afrocarpus mannii* as an example, the app tells the visitor that it was named after Georg Mann, and that its "wood has high commercial value". Another example is the *Coffea arabica* L., "one of the most important products of plant origin in world trade". The role that this and other plants played in colonial times – including in the Portuguese context – is not mentioned.

Rather than "all the stories", these examples show that the epistemic authority reproduces knowledge from the perspective of Western botanical science through a selection of plants, and through an allegedly objective, neutral, and universal discourse. Yet Western science and its development, as argued above, are in fact the product of historical, political, and social contexts. The use of Latin, for instance, stems from the fact that when Linnaeus developed his botanical nomenclature, it constituted the lingua franca of educated Europeans, therefore becoming the basis for naming plants.[84] Furthermore, plants – like the *Afrocarpus mannii* –, as well as lands, rivers, and other 'natural' elements, were often named after the European men who 'discovered' them.[85] Although naturalists relied on a large network of plant collectors, informants, porters, and on the (enslaved) labour and knowledge of local populations to understand the plants and their uses, these histories and knowledges have been downplayed or erased in the process of naming and classifying plants, in the historical record, and by botanical institutions.[86] Although often originating from Africa, Asia, Australasia, and South America, very limited information is provided regarding the non-European names, uses and meanings of the plants of the JBT. Through the chosen museological strategies and related narratives, the colonial histories of this garden and the genealogies of epistemic and slow violence associated with Western (botanical) science are dissimulated, to borrow Castelo's term.[87]

If ethnological and anthropological museums in colonial times helped disseminate and cement ideologies of difference and dominance regarding non-Western humans

84 Irving, Botanical, (2018), 75.
85 Schiebinger, Plants, 2007, 19.
86 Irving, Botanical, (2018), 79.
87 Castelo, Simulação, (2021).

and their cultures, places like botanical gardens and zoos helped reinforce ideas of (white European) humans as separate from and as mastering the natural world. Nick Shepherd uses the term "coloniality of nature" to address how imperial and colonial projects extended into the natural words, appropriating and transforming them, and embedding themselves in non-human animals and plants.[88] Shepherd not only refers to the way humans have for long been bending nature to human designs but also to the way spaces such as zoos – and I would add, botanical gardens – have worked as a statement of the mastery of humans over nature. Rolando Vázquez argues that the formation of the modern/colonial order, and the enduring effects thereof, not only rest on the control of epistemologies and geopolitics but also of perception and representation. In this sense, places like botanical gardens that fail to critically address the histories and epistemic traditions that gave rise to them, continue to condition our ways of perceiving and understanding ourselves and the world around us, revealing what Vázquez refers to as the "worldmaking power of modernity".[89]

Narrating history: the violence of display

The Garden With History route is divided into four sub-routes: Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries, Twentieth Century, Trees With History, and Portuguese World Exhibition. In the introduction, the JBT App tells the visitor about the garden's historical layers, from the sixteenth to twentieth centuries, when it was transformed into the Colonial Garden that "housed tropical and subtropical plants from the former Portuguese Colonies". Although this information falls short of offering the contextualization required to understand these histories, it represents the first of two references that associate its botanical collection to the colonial past it is implicated in. The Trees with History sub-route highlights four trees because three of them were planted by prominent politicians in 1913, 1962, and 2013; and because one is connected to a legend from Greek mythology. The garden's history of the twentieth century is told through six objects, such as the Cacti Garden and the Main Greenhouse. This sub-route includes a second brief reference to the Colonial Garden: starting with an art historical description of the Main Greenhouse, the app states that "a heating device was set up in the Greenhouse to receive, among other species, tropical and sub-tropical plants from the former Portuguese Colonies from the moment it became the Colonial Garden of Lisbon".

88 Nick Shepherd, Cecil Rhodes' Zoo and the Coloniality of Nature, in: Nick Shepherd/Christian Ernsten/Dirk-Jan Visser (eds.), The Walking Seminar, Amsterdam 2018, 29.

89 Vázquez, Vistas, 2020, 5.

Figure 3: Screenshot of the JBT App from the Portuguese World Exhibition route, source: App JBT.

The Portuguese World Exhibition sub-route represents the most significant narrative change that took place since the renovation project. This history is told by pointing at objects and spaces related to this event. The act of telling these stories, in some cases despite the lack of objects, indicates a determination to make visible and frame this event in a new way. Once again, information is limited, with the app often only mentioning that a particular structure was built for the Exhibition of 1940 and the name of the architect. In some cases, a bit more detail is provided, for instance: "the Raw Material Pavilion was built for the colonial section of the Portuguese World Exhibition and was intended to exhibit stands of materials from the former Portuguese Colonies, such as wood, rope, sisal or cotton". Although the app tells the visitor that a "Macanese street" and an "Indian street" were recreated, it does not mention the fact that live people were used in the display.

The app shows the busts in pairs, since they are siding gateways (Fig. 3). According to the official catalogue of the Exhibition of 1940, they drew on "the most representative races of the empire" and, placed together alongside an avenue in the gar-

den, constituted “the first large gallery of the peoples of the Empire shown through sculpture”.[90] According to a 1940 official magazine used to promote the event, they were made “based on photographic documentation from the Institute of Anthropology in Porto”.[91] In 2020 and for the first time, small plaques were placed next to each pair of busts, showing similar information as the app: “painted cement sculptures” that “represent” men or women from a particular former colony. The app indicates that they were produced by Manuel de Oliveira for the “Hall of the Peoples of the Empire”. Having stood silent for decades after 1940, they have now been attributed new meanings through text and by being added to the MUHNAC’s collection, as indicated by their inventory numbers.

These meanings, however, fall short of challenging the original narrative and purpose of these objects. Much like the “indigenous villages”, they served to showcase the variety of the “types” of peoples of the Portuguese empire, and in doing so, implicitly articulate a narrative of domination over others. Today, the presence of these busts contrasts heavily with the narrative of the “Discoveries” present in Belém, materialized through monuments and statues representing (mostly) men, whose full bodies tell stories about known individuals. The busts, in turn, represent the heads of nameless, ahistorical individuals and are still used to typify the “Angolan Woman” or “Mozambican Man”. Furthermore, in the app, photographs of the busts are presented from different angles, in a way that inadvertently recalls the genre of “racial type” photography established during the 1860s and 1870s and employed in anthropological expeditions.[92] I argue that their presence and the way they are still used to adorn the garden, lacking critical information about why and how they were originally used, works to preserve, to some extent, their colonial representational meaning and functions.

As of 2023, the only mention of the display of humans of the Exhibition of 1940 is a plaque located *in situ* on the artificial island of the garden’s main lake, where the “Bijagós Village” was located.[93] The text is short, in line with the standard plaque size of the garden, thus limiting its depth and complexity (Fig. 4). Nonetheless, it represents an important change that indicates a willingness to engage more critically with some of this garden’s colonial histories. By contextualizing the display of humans and their cultures within the regime’s colonial policy that was “based on political

90 Galvão, Exposição, 1940, 284 (my translation).

91 Diário de Lisboa, 1940, cited in Gouveia, Jardim, (2021) (my translation).

92 Andrew Bank, Anthropology and Portrait Photography, Gustav Fritsch’s ‘Natives of South Africa’, 1863–18721, in Kronos 27 (2001), 43.

93 There are, however, joint plans between the MUHNAC and the association Batoto Yetu to add a second plaque (possibly at the entrance of the garden), to recall this history and those who were displayed (Marta Lourenço, in correspondence with author, 14 January 2023).

Figure 4: The signboard about the "Bijagós Village", added in 2020, photo by Ana Godinho, 2020.

dominance and subjugation", the text produces an important and contrasting narrative to that found elsewhere in the garden, and even more so in Belém.

The earlier narrative silence in the JBT has given way to a partial engagement with some of its colonial histories since 2020. This represents a narrative "re-emergence" that implies an active and critical engagement with the past that is reactivated from its previous condition of invisibility, to challenge Eurocentric narratives that obscure past violence.[94] This re-emergence should be understood in the context of the shift that has been taking place in Europe, examined in the opening paragraphs. Ana Godinho (curator of the MUHNAC) also connects this shift to the institutional change this garden underwent when it was transferred from a research institute (the IICT) to a museological institution (the MUHNAC).[95] Nonetheless, given the original purpose of the busts and "indigenous villages" and the way racism holds sway in Portuguese society today, much more needs to be done in this living museum to engage with these histories, to foster reflections about their durabilities, and to offer other ways of thinking that might help shape more equitable futures.

94 Britta Timm Knudsen, "Re-Emergence", in: ECHOES: European Colonial Heritage Modalities in Entangled Cities (2018), http://projectechoes.eu/keywords/ (20 September 2021).

95 Ana Godinho, in conversation with author, 20 October 2021.

My analysis of the poetics and politics of exhibiting the garden's collections reveals a visible contrast: whereas the "natural" elements are mostly represented as timeless and ahistorical, through a scientific discourse that reinforces hegemonic systems of knowledge, a few objects and plaques are now used to tell some of the histories of the Exhibition of 1940. This contrast can to a great extent be explained by the compartmentalization of the disciplines of the team in charge of the renovation and curation of the garden, and by a dominance of professionals and researchers from the "natural sciences".[96] According to Godinho and Costa, the (re-)interpretation of the garden's collection followed a dualistic approach: whereas botanists and other scientists were in charge of the "natural" elements, professionals from humanities disciplines focused on the "historical" elements.[97] The way in which institutions are structured and disciplines are divided shows yet another way in which the modern/colonial dualistic worldview endures in the present.

Despite the coexistence of different narratives, I argue that the character of this living museum as a "natural" space and the narrative that exalts the "prestige" of the garden as a place of "high scientific interest", which "tells the story of Portugal and the Portuguese in the world", overshadows the attempts to critically engage with its colonial histories. Its physical character and the choice to include few plaques, means that this space continues to be primarily recognized for its natural elements. The narrative change about the Exhibition of 1940 is only noticeable to the alert visitor who knows about the app and that spots the plaque about the "indigenous villages", since the information *in situ* only hints at the garden's colonial histories. In examining how the epistemic authority dissimulates most forms of colonial violence this garden is implicated in, how it reproduces harmful modern/colonial narratives, and how it fails to engage with the durabilities of coloniality today, this analysis exposes the violence of the JBT's display.

Conclusion: from implication to change

In this article, I examined the colonial histories of the JBT and the narratives and knowledges (re)produced there today through the act of exhibiting, and reflected on how these are implicated in different forms of violence. I argued that the museological strategies employed reflect an effort to confront some of the garden's colonial histories, while revealing durable effects of modern/colonial worldviews and epis-

96 The webpage about the renovation includes the names of those involved in the project. A quick Google search reveals that the team leading the project is made up almost entirely of researchers and two curators from the University of Lisbon specialized in fields such as taxonomy and biology.

97 Costa and Godinho, 5 August 2020.

temologies. The world today is characterized by interconnected crises of inequality, social injustice, and environmental deterioration, which cannot be fully understood without an awareness of the modern/colonial histories that gave rise to them. Although focused on a botanical garden in Portugal, many of the arguments I developed apply to other contexts and museological institutions with greater or lesser connections to colonialism.

Many societies still view nature as an infinite and inert repository of resources; and in many countries, social injustice persists. As Ghassan Hage puts it, both racism and the environmental crisis "are in effect one and the same crisis, a crisis in the dominant mode of inhabiting the world that both racial and ecological domination reproduces".[98] In this article, I showed how violence towards nature and humans has been an intertwined process and revealed some of the ways these histories endure in the present – both in museological practices and ways of perceiving and producing knowledge about the world. Considering the JBT's histories and its location – within Portugal's site of memory of the "Discoveries" and in a country with a long colonial history –, I believe it is particularly well suited for the necessary task of confronting historical and ongoing violence in the present. To make that possible, it is essential to carry out more research to better understand how this garden is entangled in colonial policies of occupation and exploitation of Portugal's former colonies, and how these impacted local populations and the environment.

I conclude with a few practical examples and concepts that detail how this has been done in other contexts. For instance, the 2019–2020 temporary exhibition "Displays of Power: A Natural History of Empire" at the Grant Museum of Zoology in London,[99] shows how adding labels to existing displays helps complicate the narratives produced. Some of the labels were kept after the exhibition ended, allowing information about colonial dominance over nature to coexist alongside the older scientific narrative. The changes taking place at the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, also in the UK, in the context of the Manifesto for Change 2021–2030,[100] represent another example. These include a new display at the Chinese Grove, an area with plants collected from China in the nineteenth century. It presents the names of the plants as used in China and in the West, as well as information showing how at that time, China too was developing a rich body of knowledge on bot-

98 Ghassan Hage, Is Racism an Environmental Threat?, Cambridge/Malden 2017, 14.

99 Displays of Power: A Natural History of Empire, in UCL (2021), https://www.ucl.ac.uk/culture/whats-on/displays-power-natural-history-empire (10 August 2021).

100 Nazia Parveen, Kew Gardens director hits back at claims it is 'growing woke', in: The Guardian (18 March 2021), https://www.theguardian.com/science/2021/mar/18/kew-gardens-director-hits-back-at-claims-it-is-growing-woke (12 September 2021).

any.[101] Such approaches could be followed in the JBT, whether through the existing app, additional plaques *in situ* or other media. An audio guide might also work well in a space that lends itself to movement and contemplation.

The concepts of pluriversality and relationality, in turn, could be productive towards the development of more reflexive and impactful museological practices. Pluriversality involves a refusal of the universal "truths" of modernity, thus enabling a coexistence of different worlds – be they worlds of perception, epistemologies, or ontologies.[102] In a garden with plants from around the world, this could be done by presenting knowledges about nature from multiple standpoints and epistemological and ontological traditions. Relationality "is the awareness of the integral relation and interdependence amongst all living organisms (in which humans are only a part) with territory or land and the cosmos. It is a relation and interdependence in search of balance and harmony of life in the planet".[103] To confront the coloniality embedded in this garden, while showing how violence against nature and humans is interconnected and ongoing, has the potential to foster different understandings about our relationship to each other and the natural world. One should not underestimate the power of (critical) museology to shape, challenge, or even change worldviews.

101 Sharon Willoughby, Inclusive Storytelling in the Royal Botanic Gardens (presentation during ICOMOS Netherlands Lecture), 12 May 2021, Recording accessible on ICOMOS Netherlands Youtube page, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l9zE6K2BN24 (10 November 2021).

102 Mignolo, The Darker Side, 2011, 176.

103 Walter Mignolo/Catherine E. Walsh (eds.), On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis, Durham 2018, 1.