

Asking the Trees, a work focusing on the question of home and its loss for political reasons, seeks to forge temporal links between the past and the present, and territorial links between home and exile. In 2016, following several years of research, the artist created an herbarium of plants from parks and gardens in Austria that used to be part of properties seized by the Nazis. The work is embedded within a collection of diary-style texts, written during a visit to the USA in 2015, and a series of photographs that fictively reconstruct the original owners' memories of their homes and properties.

*Die Arbeit Asking the Trees, in deren Zentrum die Frage nach Heimat und dem Verlust von Heimat aus politischen Gründen steht, hat das Ziel, zeitliche Verbindungen zwischen Vergangenheit und Gegenwart und territoriale Verbindungen zwischen Heimat und Exil zu schaffen. Nach mehrjähriger Recherche begann 2016 die Arbeit an einem Herbarium aus Parks und Gärten von in der NS-Zeit enteignetem Besitz in Österreich. Eingebettet ist die Arbeit in eine Sammlung tagebuchartiger Texte, geschrieben während eines USA-Aufenthaltes 2015, und eine Serie von Fotografien, die fiktiv Erinnerungsbilder ehemaliger BesitzerInnen an ihre Anwesen und Häuser rekonstruieren.*

## **Asking the Trees**

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Asking the  
Trees

Annelies Senfter

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strategy for combating anti-Semitism and fostering Jewish life. Although this strategy had no direct impact on my work all at once it became clear to me that it was completed.

LN: *As you described, finding a form for the project was more an intuitive process. Nevertheless, can you explain why the form of the herbarium was the one that worked best?*

When you look at the work, you at once recognise a historical herbarium—and this is what Linné's leaf does a different level of meaning opens up. The Latin name of the tree is given, and the day of collection—but instead of the soil condition of the locality, there is a highly condensed version of the dispossessed carrier's story. It is now no longer a question of the leaf from a tree in a random location, but of the history of a family, of a place, a history of home, of death, persecution, loss of homeland, and of exile.

Motahar Amiri is artist and curator at Fothof Salzburg, Lena Nievers is curator and head of collection for Modern Art at the Salzburg Museum of Modern Art.

*Erb\*innen verkauft. Wägen Holocaustüberlebende bilden oder kehren aus der Emigration zurück. Die Häuser sind jetzt zum Teil in öffentlichem Besitz oder Sitz von Vereinen oder Stiftungen. Die Reaktionen der jeweiligen privaten Besitzer\*innen waren sehr unterschiedlich: von Anweisungen bis zu langen Gesprächen, in denen mir bewusst wurde, dass die heutigen Eigentümer\*innen zum Teil sehr gut über die Geschichte ihres Hauses Bescheid wissen.*

LN: *An welchem Punkt war das Projekt für dich abgeschlossen?*

*Es gab tatsächlich einen ganz bestimmten Moment in dem die Arbeit für mich abgeschlossen war: Im Herbst 2021 hörte ich auf einer Autofahrt einen Beitrag im Radio: Die Europäische Kommission legte die erste Europäische Strategie zur Bekämpfung von Antisemitismus und zur Förderung jüdischen Lebens in Europa vor. Obwohl es keine direkte Beziehung zwischen meiner Arbeit und der Präsentation dieser Strategie gab, war mir auf einmal klar, dass sie abgeschlossen ist.*

LN: *Die Formfindung für das Projekt war ja, wie du beschrieben hast, ein eher intuitiver Prozess. Kannst du dennoch in Worte fassen, warum die Form des Herbariums diejenige war, die für dich für diese Arbeit am besten funktioniert?*

*Wenn man die Arbeit sieht, glaubt man auf den ersten Blick, ein historisches Herbarium vor sich zu haben, und das war auch meine Absicht. Erst wenn der Betrachter/die Betrachterin zu lesen beginnt, öffnet sich eine andere Bedeutungsebene. So ist zunächst zwar die lateinische Bezeichnung des Baumes genannt und auch der Tag, an dem das Blatt gesammelt wurde. Anstatt der Bodenbeschaffenheit des Fundortes findet sich dann jedoch in ganz konzentrierter Form die Geschichte der exilierten Besitzer erzählt. Es geht nicht nur mehr um das Blatt eines Baumes an einem beliebigen Ort, sondern um die Geschichte einer Familie, eines Ortes, eine Geschichte von Heimat, vom Verlust von Heimat, von Tod, Verfolgung und von Exil.*

Motahar Amiri ist Künstler und Kurator im Fothof Salzburg, Lena Nievers ist Kuratorin und Sammlungsleiterin für Moderne Kunst im Museum der Moderne Salzburg.

Photos and notes by/Foto und Notizen von  
Annelies Seifner





HERBARIUM

*Fraxinus excelsior*, Gemeine Esche

loc. Palais Lieben Auspitz, Wien

In einer Wohnung des Palais an der Ringstraße führt die Journalistin und Schriftstellerin Berta Zuckerkandl einen einflussreichen Salon. Hier verkehren Künstler und Wissenschaftler, u.a. Oskar Klenk, Arthur Schnitzler, oder Max Reinhardt. Berta Zuckerkandl flüchtete 1938 über Paris nach Algier und stirbt 1945 in Paris.

dat. 21.07.2019 N° 42

leg. A. Sautter



HERBARIUM

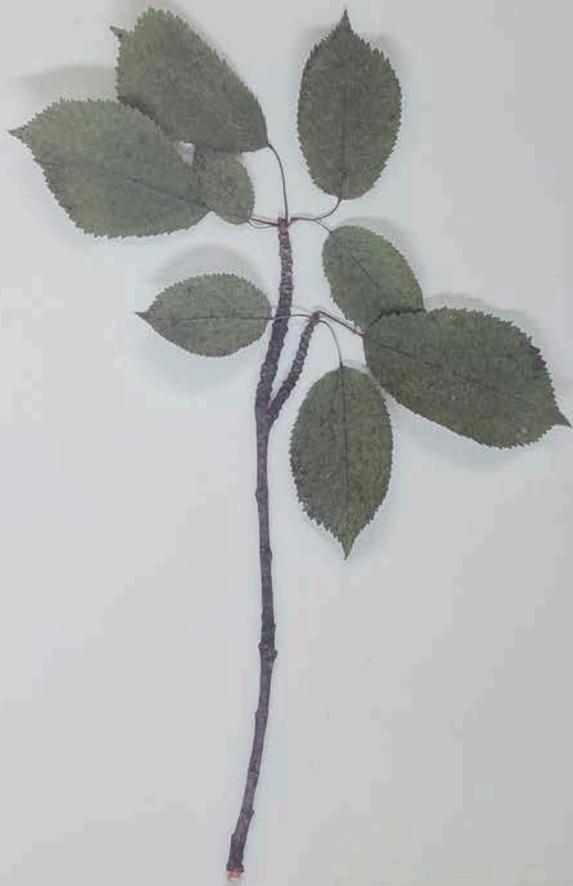
*Syringa*, Flieder

loc. Pykergraben, Wien

Im Hause der Musikerfamilie Rosé treffen sich jüdische wie nichtjüdische Persönlichkeiten der Wiener Musikwelt. Arnold Rosé, Violinist und Kammermeister der Wiener Philharmoniker, gelangt 1938, nach seinem Ausschluss aus dem Orchester, ins Exil nach England. Im selben Jahr verlässt seine Frau Dahnine.

dat. 10.08.2019 N° 43

leg. A. Sautter



HERBARIUM

*Brunia domestica*, Pflanze

loc. Detropferstraße, Trosslbrunn

dat. 05.08.2017 N° 18

leg. A. Seifert



HERBARIUM

*Acer glaberrimum*, Kinnahorn

loc. Müllersche Straße, Gussbrunn, Geyers

Karl Bauer, Mitbesitzer des Kaufhauses  
„Bauer und Schwarz“, Onkeler- und  
„Kaufhaus Tyrol“, wird in der Programmnacht in  
seiner Wohnung überfallen und schwer verletzt.  
Er flieht in Folge mit seiner Frau Alice Bauer  
und den Kindern Alois und Gerda in die USA.

dat. 05.08.2017 N° 19

leg. A. Seifert

N° 17  
*Gomortia lasiocarpa*  
 Lawson cypress  
 Lawrence Schenck  
 Dettingerstraße,  
 Heidelberg

In January 1906, Arnold Thierbach was invited to sell the house and garden. The house was demolished. In December 1906, the detached house had to be sold. In Vienna, a lot of trees were planted in the garden. Most of them died in winter. The house was destroyed by fire in January 1908. The lot was sold.

In June 1908, the lot was sold. The house was destroyed by fire in January 1908. The lot was sold.

N° 18  
*Picea canadensis*  
 Swiss stone pine / Zirbe  
 Villa Frencken  
 Heilbronn

In 1800, the lot was sold. The house was destroyed by fire in January 1908. The lot was sold.

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N° 19  
*Abies alba*  
 Common fir  
 Gernsheim  
 Heilbronn

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N° 20  
*Betula pendula*  
 Silver birch / Hänge-Birke  
 Villa Kaufmann, St. Gölgen

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N° 21  
*Prunella domestica*  
 Plum / Pflaume  
 Dettingerstraße,  
 Heidelberg

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N° 22  
*Rehmannia pinnatifida*  
 False acacia (false locust) / Falsche Akazie  
 Heilbronn

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N° 23  
*Abies alba*  
 Common fir  
 Gernsheim  
 Heilbronn

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N° 24  
*Corylus colurna*  
 Turkish hazel / Rosthazel  
 Villa Kaufmann, St. Gölgen

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N° 25  
*Acer platanoides*  
 Norway maple / Buchhorn  
 Gläselstraße,  
 Heidelberg

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N° 26  
*Salix caprea*  
 Elder / Holunder  
 Villa Hofmann, Rosenfeld,  
 Heilbronn

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N° 27  
*Quercus robur*  
 Common oak / Stiel-Eiche  
 Schloss Langelberg,  
 Heilbronn

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N° 28  
*Fagus sylvatica*  
 Common beech / Rottbuche  
 Villa Birkhof, St. Gölgen

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N° 29  
*Thuja occidentalis*  
 Western red cedar / Hemlock-Larichtanne  
 Villa Hofmann, Rosenfeld,  
 Heilbronn

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N° 30  
*Pinus sylvestris*  
 Common pine / Holländische Lärche  
 Schloss Langelberg,  
 Heilbronn

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N° 31  
*Pinus nigra*  
 Aleppo pine  
 Villa Birkhof, St. Gölgen

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N° 32  
*Pinus peuceuntia*  
 Pinus peuceuntia  
 Villa Birkhof, St. Gölgen

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 Western red cedar / Hemlock-Larichtanne  
 Villa Hofmann, Rosenfeld,  
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N° 34  
*Pinus sylvestris*  
 Common pine / Holländische Lärche  
 Schloss Langelberg,  
 Heilbronn

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N° 35  
*Pinus nigra*  
 Aleppo pine  
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N° 36  
*Pinus peuceuntia*  
 Pinus peuceuntia  
 Villa Birkhof, St. Gölgen

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