

defiance
and liberation



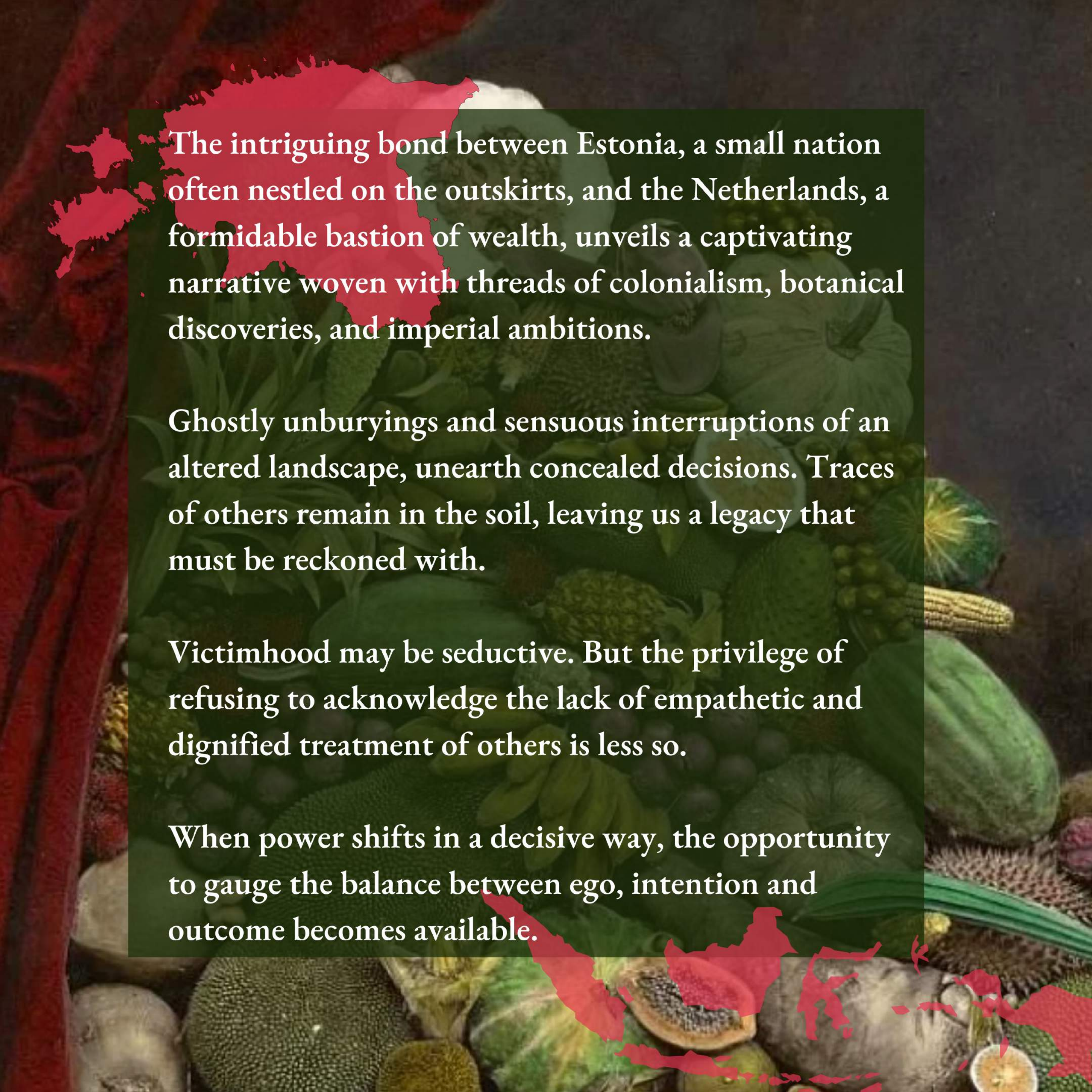
Arundinaria Speciosa

Orchidelirium: An Appetite for Abundance

Based on the life and works of Emilie Rosalie Saal

**St. Petersburg, 1905: The First Russian Revolution ignited,
forever etching 'Bloody Sunday' into the annals of history.**

Vladimir Yegorovich Makovsky, The 9th of January in 1905 on Vasilyevsky Island, 1905.
Oil on canvas. Courtesy of the State Central Museum of Contemporary History of Russia.



The intriguing bond between Estonia, a small nation often nestled on the outskirts, and the Netherlands, a formidable bastion of wealth, unveils a captivating narrative woven with threads of colonialism, botanical discoveries, and imperial ambitions.

Ghostly unburials and sensuous interruptions of an altered landscape, unearth concealed decisions. Traces of others remain in the soil, leaving us a legacy that must be reckoned with.

Victimhood may be seductive. But the privilege of refusing to acknowledge the lack of empathetic and dignified treatment of others is less so.

When power shifts in a decisive way, the opportunity to gauge the balance between ego, intention and outcome becomes available.



St. Petersburg, 1905: The First Russian Revolution ignited, forever etching 'Bloody Sunday' into the annals of history.

Vladimir Yegorovich Makovsky, *The 9th of January in 1905 on Vasilyevsky Island*, 1905.
Oil on canvas. Courtesy of the State Central Museum of Contemporary History of Russia.

Karl Akel, the first celebration of Estonian Independence Day in Tallinn, 24th of February, 1919.
Photograph. Courtesy of the National Archives of Estonia.



In the year 1918, Estonians boldly declared their independent and democratic republic, illuminating the path of self-determination.

VÄLIS-EESTI

VÄLISEESTLASTE AJAKIRI

MAI, 1936

Nr. 5.

8. AASTAKÄIK

Harutlusi asumaade küsimuse ümber.

Sõnum Hispaania lehes. — Vastuvälteid asumaade soetamise kavadele eesti ajakirjanduses. — Väliseestlaste koondamise vajadus asundustesse. — Häälid Lõuna-Ameerikast.

Möödas on need ajad, kus ookeani taga asus veel küllaldaselt tundmatuid maad, mida ei olnud veel rüüvanud ei tsivilisatsioon ega kultuur ja kus ei olnud välja kujunenud mingit kõrgemat rühmitust korraga. Need olid siis „ei kellegi“ maad, mis nagu ootasid vallutajaid ja valitsejaid. Tol ajal ei inestunud keegi, kui mõne väikese riigi vaprad meresõitjad, avastades sellise tundmatu saare või maa-ala, kinnitasid selle kuuluvaks oma riigile. See oli aeg, kus sellised väikesed riigid, nagu Holland, Belgia, Portugal j. t. kogusid omale määratuid asunuid ja rikastasid nende ekspluatatsioonist.

Olnuks meie väike Eesti tol ajal juba iseseisev riik, küllap leidnaks teinagi julged meresõitjad kuskilt vallutamatut saart ja heisannuks seal eesti lipu! Ei siis olnuks nüüd üldse vaja murda selle üle pead, kuidas koondada võõrsile veevenud eestlaste peret või kuhu juhtida oma rändnuhkimulisi noori, nagu ei ole seda muret hollandlastel, belglastel ja teistel väikeriikidel, kel asunuid, rüükimata suurriikidest.

Kui nüüd julgeda unistada oma asumaade soetamisest, kus või tervishoidliku koloonia asutamiseski, siis unistusesagi ta tunneb mõnelegi liig julge, et mitte kutsuda esile vastuvälteid.

Kultuuri hell ollakse ses küsimuses nüüd-sel ajal, tõendab juba seegi, et Joh. Maide mõttemoelusi selles küsimuses on märgitud välismaangi ajakirjanduses. Sel puhul on hispaania ajalehed need, kes pahandult sõna võtnud, sest Joh. Maide kirjutis pöördus eeskätt Hispaaniale kuuluvate Vähemere saarte ostmise võimalust.

Oleme saanud ühe väljalõike hispaania lehest, kus suure pealkirjaga teatatakse: „Eesti soovib omandada Cabrera saare. Kavatseb seal asutada sanatooriumi“.

Ja edasi pöörab sõnum:

„Tallina (Estonia), 8. IV. Ajalehed on ära toonud artikli, mida hiljuti avaldas üks eesti ajakiri, mis on äratanud suurt tähelepanu, kuna sellest nähtub, et asumaade ihasid ei oma mitte ainult suured riikvused, vaid ka väikesed; vähemalt käesoleval juhul ei kavatseta vägivaldselt vallutamist, vaid ainult territooriumide omandamist.“

Tõeliselt, äratoodud artiklis nõutakse üht asunuid Eestile, õigustades seda nõudmist tolle ma mitterahuldava kliimaga, kus kange kiilm tingib tervisekuma maa-ala kasutamise vajaduse.

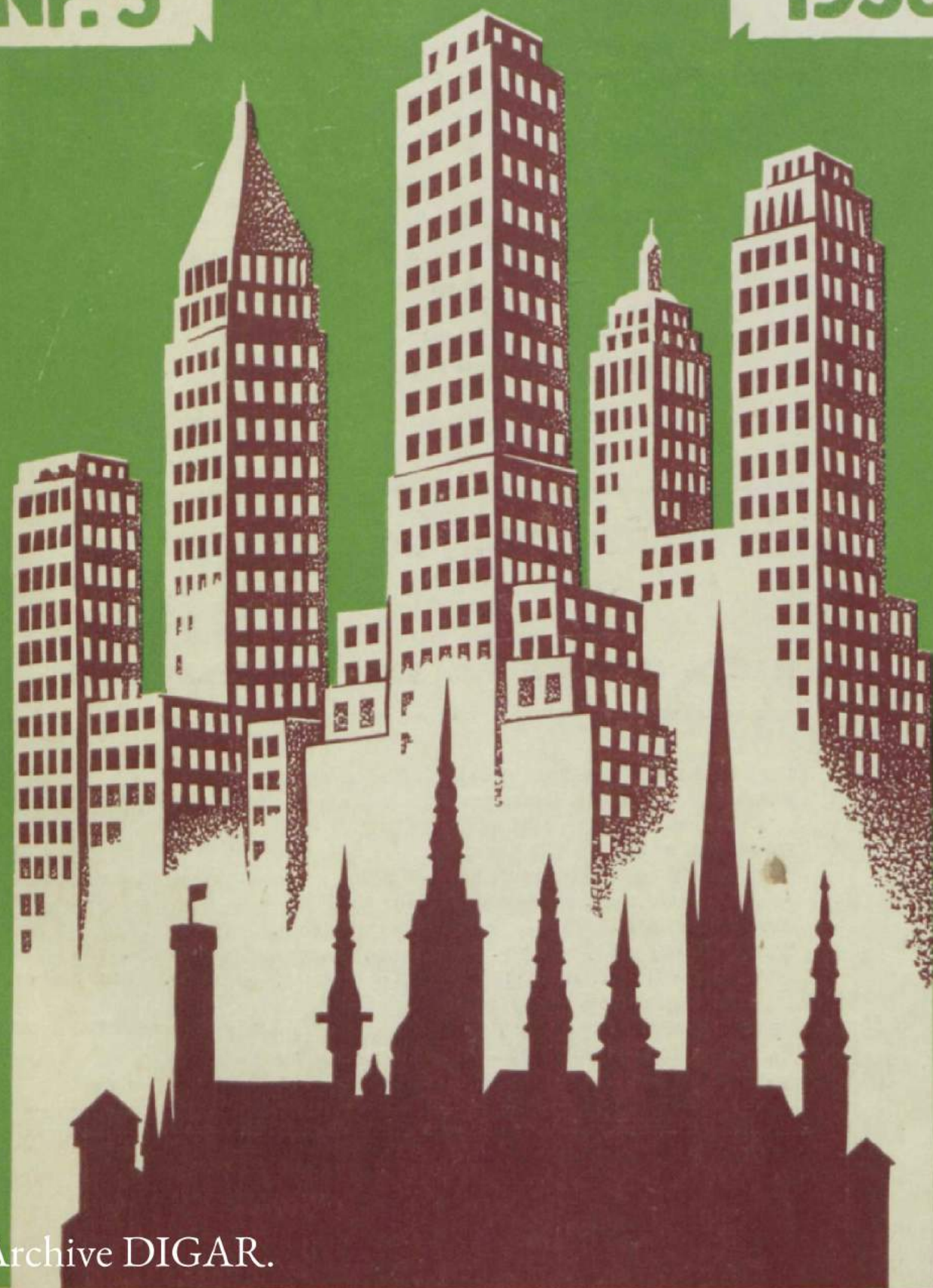
Artikli autor ühtub Tallinna (Revali) valitsust astuma samme Eestile väikese

In pursuit of a complete European identity after gaining independence, Estonia yearned for the possession of its own colonial domains.

VÄLIS-EESTI

Nr. 5

1936



Preserved within the pages of Valis-Eesti (May 1936), the Estonian debate during the interwar era comes alive, reflecting the contemplation of which colonies would best suit their aspirations for acquisition.

After Andres Saal's retirement from the Dutch Colonial Army, the Saals discovered solace and prosperity in Hollywood, the City of Dreams.



In the hills of Hollywood, California, 1931. Postcard. Courtesy of the Estonian Literary Museum.



Amidst the opulent gardens of 1920s Hollywood, a guardian gnome stands sentinel, watching over the Saal family and their realm of splendor.

Emilie Saal and Andres Saal in their garden in Los Angeles, photograph, c. 1930s. Courtesy of the Estonian Literary Museum.

Andres Saal's words echoed with admiration: "A flowering orchid is a sensation, resembling a fairytale." Yet, behind this enchantment lies a harsh truth. The insatiable obsession of collectors drove orchid hunters to decimate the very landscapes where these plants thrived, leaving a trail of destruction in their wake.

Emilie Rosalie Saal, Bamboo Orchid, 1995, [c. 1910-1916s]. Offset lithograph, 48 x 63.5 cm. Courtesy of Corina L. Apostol.

Arundinaria Speciosa



At the threshold of his Jakarta home in 1945, Soekarno, the first president of Indonesia, proclaimed with unwavering resolve, "We, the people of Indonesia, hereby declare the birth of our independent nation."



Frans Mendur, Sukarno, accompanied by Mohammad Hatta (right), proclaiming the independence of Indonesia, Jakarta, 1945. Courtesy of Department of Information Presidential Documents, National Library of Indonesia.

With hopeful intent, Eunike Ngroho, the visionary behind the Indonesian Botanical Artists Association, stands beside her watercolor masterpiece depicting the Titan/Corpse Flower, expressing her belief that botanical art can safeguard the existence of endangered plant species.



Bari Paramarta Islam, Eunike Nugroho with her painting of *Amorphophallus titanum*, exhibited at the first IDSBA exhibition, for Worldwide Botanical Art Day, May 18th, 2018.

Courtesy of the artist.

Where do we find ourselves in this romanticised machinery of amnesia?



The insatiable quest for the rare, the exotic, the precious, and the sensual mirrors a political landscape defined by the pursuit of abundance, as nature's art becomes a tool of visual consumption carefully adapted to seduce the masses.

Emilie Rosalie Saal, Andres Saal, Fruit Still Life, Java Island.

Courtesy of the Estonian Literary Museum.



Andres Saal, Fruit Still Life,
photograph, c. 1902-1920.
Courtesy of the Estonian Literary
Museum

Through Andres Saal's photographs, plants are extracted from their native context, destined to be (re)presented to a European audience. This act, however, reveals a darker truth—the razing of lands, the subsequent devastation of ecosystems, all fueled by slavery, exploitative plant extraction, and the erasure of indigenous botanical wisdom.

During the 1920s, orchids achieved such eminence in the United States that they ascended to the esteemed status of the official flower of the White House. Adorning the First Lady's attire, substantial orchid corsages graced every momentous occasion.



Photographer unknown, US President Woodrow Wilson and his then fiancée, Edith, photograph, 1915.



Can we see beyond the allure of colonial narratives that fetishize and exploit the culture of others?



Javanese Women Making Batik Sarongs, World's Colombian Exposition in Chicago, photograph, 1893

Indonesian women, objectified and paraded, became a spectacle of racial otherness, emblematic of the World's Colombian Exposition in Chicago, 1893. This exhibition epitomized the disturbing dynamics of colonial supremacy and imperial assertions of power.



Kristjan Raud, Kratt-Viija, 1927. Drawing. Courtesy of Art Museum of Estonia.

In Estonian mythology, a Kratt embodies a profound pact wherein an owner surrenders their very soul to obtain its services. Yet, this enslaved creature, bound by relentless toil, rebels against its master if not perpetually engaged in labor. The Kratt stands as a poignant symbol of both servitude and defiance.




Museum and Sunken Gardens. Exposition Park Los Angeles, 1932.
Courtesy of the Western Publishing & Novelty Co.

In 1926, Emilie Saal mesmerized audiences with an extraordinary exhibition at the Los Angeles Museum of History, Science, and Art. Her collection showcased 333 watercolors and oil paintings, capturing over a hundred elusive orchid species. The artistic marvel garnered immense acclaim, leading to the recognition of her work's value in the US.


TABAC





The enduring influence of 19th-century colonial hierarchies persists within the organizing, categorizing, and exhibition practices of museums, particularly concerning cultures of non-European peoples. These methods of presentation continue to shape and reflect the power dynamics that perpetuate colonial legacies in the present day.

Author unknown, Tobacco culture exhibition Dutch East Indies in the second Dutch pavilion at the Colonial World Exhibition in Paris, photograph, 1931. Courtesy of the Dutch National Museum of World Cultures.



Orchidelirium. An Appetite for Abundance

Based on the life and works of Emilie Rosalie Saal

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Orchidelirium 2023