Uriel Orlow

“I am not an invisible, objective observer of the world”

Uriel Orlow in conversation with Andrea Thal and Giovanni Carmine

ANDREA THAL Here we are, conversing online from three different places, as the year draws to its close. Giovanni, you are in the Kunst Halle Sankt Gallen. I’m speaking from Cairo, where I work at the Contemporary Image Collective (CIC). And you, Uriel, are at your studio in Lisbon, which has been your main live-work base for the last few years. You have just come back from the Kochi Biennale, where you have work on show. How would you describe the current state of your practice and the questions and reflections it entails?

URIEL ORLOW My stay in Kochi was very nice, but not without its complications, because the exhibition opening had to be postponed. I was excited to show there a new stage of a work that I had been developing in Switzerland since 2020 and which was first exhibited at Kunsthalle Nairs in the Lower Engadine in early 2022. The work is about alpine plants that are changing their habitat, moving ever higher up, due to global warming. This phenomenon is even more pronounced at higher altitudes than elsewhere. My invitation to the Kochi Biennale arrived already in 2020, so I conceived this work translocally from the outset. My aim was to conduct related research in the Swiss Alps and the Himalayas and then connect the two. Clearly, we have to address climate change on a planetary scale; but this also means that we must make connections between different places with phenomena in common. In Switzerland, during the pandemic, I managed to accompany a researcher from the Swiss National Park on her survey of the Gorihorn in the Lower Engadine; but since field work of that sort was impossible in South Asia during that time, I had to change my approach and work remotely with material I could find online. This, in turn, was reflected in the work, which consists of drawings and satellite photographs as well as a 30-metre strip of 120 monochrome images, in which the warming of the Himalayas over the last 120 years is portrayed as a spectrum of colour, from initial blues to the darkening reds of the last forty years. Together with the video and silkscreen print made in Switzerland, the installation is an attempt to find new ways of depicting climate change – beyond the spectacle-driven media images of floods and fires; namely by focusing on plants.

THAL Which have become commonplace?

ORLOW Plants are definitely commonplace; but plants are also easily overlooked, and even more so at over 3,000 metres, where people don’t just

happen to walk by. We often see the vegetal realm simply as a backdrop to our own existence, and plants as passive and immobile extras. But here they are, migrating upwards – due to climate change – to establish new habitats. This happens at a particular pace. It's a much slower process than what happens with a forest fire or a flood, say. And yet the scale of the shift up there, and just how many new plants have settled there, is quite alarming. These changes also allow conclusions to be drawn about the situation at lower altitudes.

GIOVANNI CARMINE You've touched here on a lot of issues pivotal to your work. Can you tell us more about your relationship to plants or vegetation, the subjects that you have consistently put centre-stage in your projects over the last few years? A recent publication of yours even has the title *Conversing with Leaves* (2020). To what extent is Uriel Orlow a "plant whisperer"?

ORLOW I see myself more as someone who listens to plants. But either way, it's true that plants have been a major focus in my work for some time now.

CARMINE Are you conscious of a turning point, of a moment in your artistic biography, when plants crept into your work as protagonists or as a major theme?

ORLOW There is a back story of sorts. When I was working in Jerusalem on *Unmade Film* (2012/2013), I came across a collection of stereoscopic glass plate negatives of the flora of Palestine, commissioned in the 1920s by the American Colony in Jerusalem. Each negative shows two images of a single local plant, side by side, in a kind of proto-3D technology. I was struck by this duplicity, which from today's perspective could be read as a harbinger of the partition of the country; for nowadays we speak of the flora of Israel and the flora of Palestine, even though the two are, of course, one and the same. Also, time and the storage conditions had partially corroded the glass negatives. I had a feeling that there was something to these images of plants – a historical connection. However, in the work that ensued in 2012, *Double Vision (Native Plants)*, I hadn't yet fully grasped the extent of this entanglement. The decisive moment came two years later, when I was invited to Cape Town for a brief research residency. After a meeting, which happened to take place in the café in the National Botanical Garden, I visited the garden

itself and noticed that the labels next to the plants were all in English and Latin, although South Africa has eleven official languages. That was an eye-opener. I realised that the plants there are witnesses to the history of European colonialism. They were collected by European botanists on scientific expeditions then renamed and fed into the European classification system, while indigenous forms of knowledge and naming were suppressed. This was the starting point for my engagement with plants as actors in their own right and not just as a backdrop to human history.

CARMINE You've mentioned Palestine and South Africa, two politically charged places on which you take an unambiguous stand. It is ineluctable, for you, to express yourself politically as an artist. How is this engagement with political and social issues expressed in your work on plants?

ORLOW I don't see myself as being an artist in a parallel world. I create images in and of our world, so I am inevitably entangled with a politics of representation as well as with political, historical, social and aesthetic realities. But that doesn't necessarily mean tackling the political head-on. Early on in my practice I became interested in events on the margins of history and politics, off the beaten track, in so-called blind spots, where we expect to find little of interest, because the focus lies elsewhere, but where, perhaps for that very reason, a lot of connections can be made. My strategy has often been a sideways, "oblique" approach, in order to acknowledge how history still resonates in the present, and to include forgotten episodes and places, and other players as well. Plants, for instance. So, that epiphany I had in Cape Town's botanical garden led in the subsequent years to a whole string of projects dealing with colonial entanglements of South Africa and Europe; they came together under the umbrella of *Theatrum Botanicum* (2015–2018), the body of work exhibited, among other places, at the Kunst Halle Sankt Gallen – with you, Giovanni. But it also became clear, that this wasn't an idea I could wrap up in just one project. I realised that plants play a role at many levels, and so various artistic strategies are needed. For example, I began recording local plant names all over South Africa, in a dozen indigenous languages. This audio archive then became the 8-channel sound installation *What Plants Were Called Before They Had A Name* (2015–2018), a kind of audio-dictionary of orally transmitted plant names that had been overshadowed by Western nomenclature. My interest was also spurred by the story of the garden that Nelson Mandela and his fellow inmates on Robben Island created during their eighteen

years of incarceration, and the role it played in history – for example, as a hiding place for Mandela's biography *Long Walk to Freedom* (1994), which he wrote while in prison. That became the installation *Grey, Green, Gold* (2016–2017). I also started to work with archive material from apartheid-era South Africa, where the use of plants for political ends is evident in the form of what could be called flower diplomacy and botanical nationalism (*The Fairest Heritage*, 2016–2017). And I worked on geraniums in Switzerland, which originated on the Cape yet have not only been mis-identified and naturalised in our climes but almost elevated to a national symbol (*Geraniums Are Never Red*, 2018–2020).

THAL Giovanni, in our preliminary talk you spoke of the personal conflict faced by any artist who thinks and acts globally with regard to working with plants and climate change in the context of a globalised art world. What did you mean by that?

CARMINE It's something that came up in my conversation with Uriel. How can ecological issues and a political stance be translated into art forms without being caught up in contradictions? Specifically in your work, Uriel, is it possible to act and circulate globally – to travel a lot and leave a big carbon footprint – without losing credibility? I know that you don't ignore this paradox – so how do you handle the issues it brings up?

ORLOW I am aware of these contradictions of course, and there are no simple answers. I always try to bear in mind how and where I am working, and what my position is in each respective context. What forms of sustainability can I introduce into my practice – not only in ecological terms, but also at a social level. Time plays an important role in this. I consciously take the time for longer stays as well as for field studies and encounters, which often lead to collaborations that are fundamental to my practice. This not only makes sense ecologically, but also enables me to enter into and respond to an existing ecosystem. The Covid pandemic made clear that these kinds of encounter are severely limited, whenever face-to-face meetings are not possible. In consciously positioning myself as neither a tourist on a flying visit nor a neo-colonial "cultural extractivist", I try to inhabit the complex in-between space forged by the persistent entanglements of Europe and its former colonies.

Not that this resolves issues tied up with my privileged position or the (non-) sustainability of travel; rather I try to consciously face these questions with a sense of responsibility. Everything we do has a carbon footprint, including this conversation, by the way, which relies on the energy-devouring server farms of Zoom and Google Docs being cooled 24/7. I do believe that we need to take a holistic approach to ecological responsibility as a society – because climate change and biodiversity loss are structural problems; their systemic causes need to be addressed by all of us, together, and not only individually. This means that we have to ask, say, how much and what kinds of travel can we afford, globally speaking. Or how much concrete for new buildings, and how much meat consumption (given that meat production, incidentally, emits the same amount of CO_2 as all forms of transport combined). – I am a vegetarian, by the way ...

THAL You spoke just now of your responsibility as an artist. I would like to take up this point in relation to your concept of plants as active agents. Various works of yours, in particular those that deal with plants, recurrently address the role of the plant as an actor or agent within spaces of power. One example is the film *The Crown Against Mafavuke* (2016), which unfolds in a courtroom and is a part of your *Theatrum Botanicum*. But in other works, too, you repeatedly address the matter of how authority and power, and thus also colonial power, violently dissociate themselves from the knowledge and practices that prevailed before them. Can you say something more about the courtroom as a locus of negotiation and, generally, about the spaces of power in which plants feature as actors?

ORLOW My aim is to think with plants about different forms of resistance. Take the case of Mafavuke Ngcobo, for instance, an indigenous healer and herbalist, who was accused in 1940 of incorporating in his concoctions "European" plants and "European" knowledge, which was expressly outlawed for any Black South African under apartheid: his ostensible crime, in other words, was "to steal from the West". I specifically chose to film the re-enactment of his trial in a historic courtroom, namely the Palace of Justice in Durban, the setting in 1963/64 for the Rivonia Trial that banished Mandela and his co-defendants to Robben Island. Thus, just like the plants, the colonial building became a protagonist in the film and raised some broader issues. Who has the

right to what knowledge? Which structures govern this right – conceptually, legally and academically as well as in physical-architectural terms? How can plants override or rescind human boundaries and claims to ownership? In *Imbizo Ka Mafavuke (Mafavuke's Tribunal)*, the sequel released in 2017, Mafavuke travels through time to the present day, to organise with other healers a tribunal at which the flip side is to be called into question, namely the appropriation and subsequent patented use of indigenous knowledge by the West's modern pharmaceutical industry. Here, too, plants played a pivotal role in my attempt to find other kinds of representation and other actors, so as to forge a different approach to power structures and knowledge systems.

CARMINE

Now I'd like to pursue a different thread entirely. As this discussion is taking place in the context of the Prix Meret Oppenheim, it might make sense to examine your practice in the light of that wonderful artist. There are parallels of course, for Oppenheim featured in her work many hybrid creatures that were likewise bound up with plants and flowers. But the biographical details are of even greater interest, or so it seems to me. Meret Oppenheim was quite the nomad, living here, there and everywhere, a bit like you. Yet she consistently endeavoured to discover herself afresh in each new context and also to put down roots in the local community, so as to leave on it an imprint of her personality and her work. Do you see any parallels here? Or: to what degree, if any, is the artist Meret Oppenheim of relevance to you? And could you perhaps tell us a little about how your own biography has unfolded at various spots on the globe, and how these have influenced you?

ORLOW

Well, you've already mentioned Meret Oppenheim's marvellous hybrid creatures, which we would perhaps speak of today in terms of "more-than-human entanglements", for example – when an animal fur is also a cup and saucer. Although my ductus is less animistic and also at a distance from the surrealist context of her work, I still sense a clear affiliation: namely the wish to go beyond anthropocentrism and restore our relation to the non-human and more-than-human worlds. In biographical terms, there is certainly a connection through the Jewish diaspora. I think that I've been shaped first and foremost by places I have never lived in, but from where my

family migrated to Switzerland: Poland, Ukraine and Hungary. But these places were also pushed aside and forgotten because of the caesura, the trauma of the Shoah, and this is perhaps why they became an invisible, ghostly presence. Then, as a young art student, I travelled to Eastern Europe, sort of on a quest for my roots; and this had a huge influence on my becoming an artist and also prompted, in 1995, my first significant video work *1942 (Poznan)*. In my hometown, Zurich, I felt drawn to the Café Odeon and its illustrious history as a meeting place for those European intellectuals, artists and writers who found refuge in Switzerland during the two world wars – such as Else Lasker-Schüler, Karl Kraus, and Klaus Mann, to name but a few – and this interest led to the body of work *In These Great Times* (2008). London, where I went to study when I was eighteen and subsequently remained for over twenty years, also hugely influenced me, of course: the meeting of people from all over the globe, the exchanges, the dynamic art scene as well as the themes and approaches which crop up there before spreading elsewhere. I was influenced also by lengthy stays in Egypt, Armenia, South Africa and Senegal – often, lasting for months, or for recurrent periods over several years. Over time, I felt the need to move on from my personal background and the issues of memory and responsibility that first preoccupied me, and to examine these questions instead in the light of other contexts – in which I ultimately created extensive bodies of work. These points of reference and personal networks, which have influenced my work and my artistic approach, have become threads in a social fabric that is vital to my practice. Likewise, here in Lisbon, new context-specific works have emerged that enable me to engage with translocal questions of decolonial ecology, and to develop new dialogues, prompted by a local wood library from the early 20th century: *Reading Wood (Backwards)* (2022). I guess this way of working – context-specific, site-specific and yet also nomadic – is definitely related to my background.

THAL

Meret Oppenheim is present here as a kind of ghost, hovering over this conversation. There are echoes of her biography both in your family's history and the depth of your relationship to different places. Also, ghosts or spirits are very commonplace in your work, as a presence that others have often tried to render invisible, or to not see. Time after time, you insist on seeing what is invisible, on rescuing traces, ruins and psychic wounds from the brink of oblivion. This resonates very strongly with your own family's history and your travels in Eastern Europe,

as well as with the places or objects you choose to highlight. For example, the stolen stones that actually came from an Armenian church and later, after the Armenian genocide, were incorporated in other buildings. I really like how you describe such continuities by referencing different places, and too, your interest in, or practice of, acknowledging what is merely latent.

ORLOW We have to face the ghosts of the past, we have to acknowledge what has been repressed. This also means confronting the present and accepting that the past is not past. It is not over. It haunts us – the "haunting" continues, precisely through these ghosts. This has been articulated in my practice in various ways, over the years. Take the stones you mentioned: they are from Surb Karapet, a former Armenian monastery in Eastern Anatolia, which was blown up by the Turkish army in the 1960s, when Turkey was hoping to erase all traces of Armenian history. Afterwards, a Kurdish community built a village on the site and integrated the stones into their houses. So, the past is still present: it is a latent presence that speaks to us now, and asks questions, demands something from us. And nor does the story end there, for the Kurdish village was attacked in turn, during the PKK conflict in Turkey in the 1990s. My video *Holy Precursor* (2011) takes up these cycles of violence. We can't get around these ghosts, this "unfinished business from the past", as Avery Gordon calls it, because otherwise, history repeats itself. In my practice, I try to create a kind of dialogue, a confrontation with these ghosts, be they in Poland or Armenia, Jerusalem or South Africa; and plants, too, can be ghosts, forging a living connection between the past and the present. The series *The Memory of Trees* (2016), for instance, stems from my interest in the history of certain trees in South Africa, a history wracked by violence. A tree from which slaves were hanged is still standing; it played a role in acts of violence and is a witness to that era. And, to return more specifically to latency, that is, to what is subliminally present but is perhaps not consciously registered: for me this is also a problem of representation; how to find images, how to represent something that is barely visible? How to create a palpable experience for the viewer?

CARMINE Do you feel it's the artist's responsibility to formulate such images, to generate images of these intangible or immaterial spirits, themes and stories? You dealt with postcolonial issues, such as restitution, very early on, making a work

on the Benin bronzes in 2007/2008. To what extent did living in London drive your interest in postcolonial issues? Would it be at all possible, in Switzerland, to develop a practice such as you now pursue?

ORLOW Of course, the legacy of empire makes itself felt in London on many different levels, not least in the city's demographics. And yet, despite a nuanced discourse on postcolonial issues in the 1990s and early 2000s, the question of restitution was pretty much side-lined. The *Benin Project* (2007/2008) was initially prompted by my engagement with issues related to commemorating the Holocaust, from my standpoint as a third-generation survivor at a time when the people who personally lived through it – the contemporary witnesses – were disappearing (and of course, still are), which calls for a new approach via present concerns. At the same time, it felt urgent to step out of my direct biographical framework and examine the present generation's responsibility vis-à-vis history from a broader perspective. So, when invited to engage with this I decided to work, not on art looted during the Holocaust, but on what is one of the biggest loots of modern times, namely the Benin bronzes, which are prominently on display in the British Museum in London. The Kingdom of Benin, in what is now Nigeria, was sacked by the British in the late 19th century and the bronzes have since been on show in the Western world's major museums, from Paris to New York, as well as in Zurich's Museum Rietberg. I was increasingly driven by the question of our responsibility towards such objects, as visitors to these museums. What are we to make of this looted art? And being in London made the question even more acute for me. At the time, however, no one in academia, the media or the museums themselves was talking about restitution – this has changed, finally, only in recent years. My film *The Visitor* (2007) shows me with the then King of Benin and a group of chiefs talking very openly about restitution. But for me as an artist (and not a direct political activist), restitution is not only about physically returning objects to their place of origin, but also about the need to find different forms of justice and reparation, to acknowledge the past and also, figuratively, to reinscribe memory in history. So finding images for these ghosts of ours is an important aspect of my work.

THAL The last point you made is incredibly important and it links up with what you were saying earlier when we were on the topic of the plant and the legal context. To take the plant as an actor and see things from its viewpoint is perhaps

a means to discuss new ways of accessing and producing alternative forms not only of protest, but also of justice. This form of "extended" restitution is directly tied up with acknowledgement of the past and a rethink of forms of ownership and justice. This complexity that emerges when reflecting on and accessing your topics is mirrored in the multifaceted character of your projects. They consist of various elements – or modular set pieces, rather – that are always to some degree presented in new constellations, in varying relations to one another. When you exhibit the works, you bring together fragments. This shows that you trust the visitors to an exhibition to think for themselves; and you expressly invite them to move through the venue as contributors and to join the dots themselves.

ORLOW I think that this way of working and exhibiting emerged from the realisation that there are no simple, straight answers to these complex questions. Just as the return of an object is never a complete restitution, these issues cannot ever be dealt with conclusively in a monolithic work. Research always turns up other important aspects and facets that deserve to be looked at more closely. You cannot expect a single work to cover all of this ground in one go. This is why I ended up making multiple artworks in modular bodies of work composed of interrelated parts. In Benin City I not only made the film *The Visitor*, but also the video installation *Lost Wax* (2007/2008), which shows the continuing contemporary practice of casting bronze, and *110 Years* (2007), a series of prints based on historical museum labels that show us how the Benin bronzes have been seen in the West since 1897. This multiplicity keeps the work open, so the viewers, in turn, are invited to bring their own thoughts to bear, to pull together elements and contexts, in what perhaps becomes a kind of transfer of responsibility. For me, this complicity on the part of the viewers – as Pasolini explained it in relation to readers of a screenplay (as an "unfinished" in-between thing) – is enormously important; it is the viewers who bring a work to completion and assume a shared responsibility.

CARMINE This complicity is reflected in the kaleidoscopic way you exhibit your works in a space. Here, the cross-references or the constellations of various works are carefully chosen and arranged in such a way as to provoke constructive

dialogue and raise questions. Your methodology as a writer is rooted in very thorough research – research that also approximates academic methods. Nonetheless, you repeatedly make an appearance in your work, both in cameo roles and as the main protagonist. I would be interested to know *how* you position yourself as a character in your work or in this kaleidoscope of topic and formats, as well as *why* you repeatedly stage yourself in the work. Many of your projects ensue from collective processes that you initiate and lead. Are you present in the works in order to render visible your working methods? Or is there also a bit of vanity involved?

ORLOW (laughs) I think it's a matter of positioning myself in and with the works. I take a stand and I consciously address issues from my own position, and that is not something I want to hide. Who am I in relation to this issue or that place? Who am I, say, as a European in South Africa? Or who am I in *1942 (Poznan)*, an early work from 1995, set in a swimming pool in Poland that was a synagogue until the Nazis converted it in 1942? I was there, physically present, and the way I position myself in the space is a form of bearing witness. But then, the kind of presence is always articulated differently. For example, I am not actually visible in the swimming pool; rather, the movement of the camera, an almost 360-degree panning shot, embodies a reverse bow. In *The Visitor*, I am the visitor from Europe in Benin. It's almost a cliché: a European in an African royal household, which involved a kind of performance, too, for which we assumed roles. I wanted to face up to this role, this performance, and in so doing, also to critique it and to make it visible. Clearly, I'm not an invisible, objective observer of the world. In the films in South Africa, for which I developed the script with other people and then worked with actors and actresses to create a kind of Brechtian epic theatre piece, I was perhaps a kind of medium or go-between; and the cameo appearance à la Hitchcock, in that case, seemed somehow appropriate, as a means to break the fourth wall (i.e., to shatter the theatrical illusion). Another work, *Learning from Artemisia* (2019), which I developed in Congo, with a women's cooperative, raised equally important, yet quite different issues of representation. What can I show of Africa without perpetuating stereotypes? This self-reflection became a kind of video letter, where I am present as the "author". It's never really about myself, about me personally, but rather about my roles and how I position myself with and through the work.

THAL So that too becomes visible …

ORLOW Yes, exactly. Perhaps that's why it's most likely to happen in the video works. But my research and my role as an artist are articulated in other media, too, and rendered visible there in different ways. Be it photography, print, sound, or installation, the positioning unfolds in various manners, depending on my choice and handling of the media – and on the collaboration with other people, certainly.

CARMINE How important is it to you that your works are created in a "social space"? And what kind of echo do your works engender in this space, once they are completed and put on show?

ORLOW Exchange is fundamental to my practice and there is often a collaborative aspect, shared processes with others, participation of various kinds. A work is never created in a vacuum, alone in the studio; it develops in dialogue, in the world, in a place. This means that it is never solely about my view or my opinion, but that other voices, too, have their say. It is important to me that I do not speak *for* other people, but *with* them. Feedback is a part of this dialogue, already during the creative process. And even once the work is finished, the in-situ echo is an important test. What meaning does a work have in the place where it was made and not only in the international art context? When I developed a video installation for Manifesta 12 in Palermo (*Wishing Trees*, 2018), which was about the feminist anti-mafia activism initiated by Simona Mafai in the 1990s and since then long forgotten, as well as migration from Africa, the reactions of the Palermitani touched me deeply. I felt I had hit the right note, had helped prompt public recall of something important by making it visible and audible. Because, as I mentioned earlier, I don't often work on important issues head-on but approach them rather obliquely – as in the case of plants' role as drivers of botanical nationalism or flower diplomacy in apartheid South Africa, as we talked about earlier – and this tends to open up new approaches and perspectives also locally; this too, was noted in the reception of *Theatrum Botanicum* in South Africa. However, balancing the local and the international context is not always easy. With *Learning from Artemisia*, there was an initial version created in Lubumbashi, for the Biennale there, and a revised version for subsequent exhibitions abroad. Certain images that make sense locally are read very differently in other contexts.

THAL Temporality is an important factor in this context. For one thing, you have already mentioned how a plant, thanks to its slow growth, can serve as a witness to history. Then, too, temporality is reflected in your work, which is always very long term. And, thirdly, you often work with time-based media such as video, performance, audio and – given the linear sequentiality of turning pages – publications. Temporality is a fundamental factor in your practice.

ORLOW Duration and permanence are increasingly lost to us. Perhaps it is a task of art, as I understand it, to somehow regain this connection to the world. Installations and time-based media produce an obvious sense of time; they engender a place where people can stay for a while and engage with certain issues. But also non-time-based media such as drawing and photography, both of which play an important role in my work, are inscribed in a temporality. My working methods themselves, entailing research, dialogue, collaboration, and various media, take up a great deal of time: for instance, forming a kind of ensemble with a group of musicians in Jerusalem, for *Unmade Film*, then together developing a score, the film music, for a film that has not been made; or the lengthy exchange with psychologists in Jerusalem and the West Bank, which likewise led to new work. This kind of practice is itself already inscribed in an ongoing process over extended periods of time, which is reflected in turn in the process of finding images for this and in the viewer's experience of the resulting work. Such art cannot be consumed at a glance and, in a sense, resists the fast-food image consumption we are used to. Engaging with something and taking time for it is the basis of sustainability as well as our key to new experiences and forms of consciousness.

URIEL ORLOW

Orlow studied in London at Central Saint Martins College of Art & Design and at the Slade School of Art; and at the University of Geneva; and received his PhD from the University of the Arts in London. He lectures at Zurich University of the Arts (ZHdK) and the University of Westminster, London. Orlow's work has been presented in numerous international survey exhibitions, including the 54th Venice Biennale, Manifesta 9 and 12 in Genk and Palermo, and biennales in Berlin, Dakar, Kochi, Taipei, Sharjah, Moscow, Kathmandu, Guatemala, among others. His work has also been shown in London at the Tate, Whitechapel Gallery, Showroom and ICA; in Zurich at Kunsthaus, AIA, VFO, Les Complices*, Helmhaus, Corner College and Shedhalle; and in St Gallen, Geneva, Lausanne, Fribourg, Basel, Biel, Bellinzona, Bern, Locarno, Aarau, Athens, Jerusalem, Ramallah, Marseille, Paris, Oslo, Dublin, Turin, Cairo, Istanbul, Mexico City, Beijing, New York, Chicago, Toronto, Melbourne and elsewhere. His works are represented in private and public collections in Switzerland and internationally. Recent publications by him include *Conversing with Leaves* (Archive Books, 2020), *Soil Affinities* (Shelter Press, 2019) and *Theatrum Botanicum* (Sternberg Press, 2018).

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GIOVANNI CARMINE

As Director of the Kunst Halle Sankt Gallen (www.k9000.ch), since 2007, he has curated solo exhibitions by David Lamelas, Ryan Gander, Mariana Castillo Deball, Hassan Khan, Petrit Halilaj, Sylvia Sleigh, Lawrence Abu Hamdan, Uriel Orlow, Jill Magid, Andrea Büttner and Ari Marcopoulos, and the group exhibition *The Darknet*, among others. In 2011 he was Artistic Coordinator of *ILLUMInations*, the 54th Biennale di Venezia, and co-editor of the catalogue. In 2013 he curated the Swiss Pavilion at the Biennale, with an exhibition by Valentin Carron. He writes regularly for specialist journals and other publications. He was President of the Federal Art Commission (2017–2019) and is a member of the Foundation Board of the Istituto Svizzero in Rome. He is currently curator of Art Basel Unlimited and lives and works in Zurich and St Gallen.

ANDREA THAL

Andrea Thal has been Artistic Director of Contemporary Image Collective (CIC) in Cairo, Egypt, since late 2014. She is a founding member of the Cairo working group Another Roadmap Africa Cluster (ARAC), a group of academics and practitioners working in the arts and cultural education, in formal and informal contexts, on the African continent. In 2011 she curated *Chewing the Scenery*, one of the Swiss pavilions at the 54th Biennale di Venezia. Comprising an exhibition and series of events as well as a subsequent publication, *Chewing the Scenery* was devoted to critiquing Western notions of progressivity from queer and postcolonial perspectives and to celebrating possible deviations from social roles. Until 2014, Thal ran Les Complices* in Zurich, an independent space for experimental ways of working and activist and artistic interventions in normative discourses. It was then that a closer collaboration with Uriel Orlow began. Among other things, the two of them co-edited the publication *Unmade Film*.