

## Luísa Telles

### How do tropical greenhouses sustain histories of displacement and epistemic control between South America and Europe?

#### The problem

My project combines artistic research and production. I'm studying collections at the Staatliche Naturwissenschaftliche Sammlungen Bayerns and the Botanischer Garten München-Nymphenburg, focussing on species native to the Brazilian rainforest. This project builds on previous research developed at archives and botanical gardens in Hamburg, Kiel and Leipzig, in which I produced installations combining photography, sound, textiles and porcelain. *Border bodies* reframes botanical collections as spaces where colonial epistemologies can be revisited and reimaged.

#### Core interest

*Border bodies* investigates the displacement of tropical plants from South America to Europe during colonial expansion. Many of these species survived in Europe thanks to the construction of greenhouses, such as Munich's Palmenhaus, one of the largest in the world. Their migration is inseparable from histories of imperial power, economic exploitation and biopiracy, which continue to shape inequalities between the Global South and North.

#### global dis:connect

My aim is to examine botanical gardens as cultural infrastructures of dis:connectivity, where circulation relies on interruptions, asymmetries and displacements. By tracing how tropical plants migrated through technologies such as the Wardian case, I'm uncovering how global connectivity relates to geographical and ecological power dynamics. These historic disconnections persist today, revealing ongoing entanglements between colonial pasts, environmental governance and contemporary forms of ownership and control.

#### Preliminary results

My exhibition *Geography of intimacy* at Künstlerhaus Sootbörn from 8-25 May 2026 brings together four artists who explore movement, displacement and the search for intimacy across borders. Shaped by experiences of living abroad, their works respond to conditions of transit, precarity and digitally mediated life, where closeness and isolation coexist. Through sculpture and installations, objects are repurposed, mirroring unstable living conditions and questioning what forms of intimacy, privacy and shared experience remain possible amid constant movement.

