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On the Nature of Botanical Gardens at Framer Framed

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The botanical garden is rediscovering and connecting with knowledge of nature as it existed before the Dutch domination of Indonesia: that is one of the objectives of the exhibition On the Nature of Botanical Gardens in Framer Framed. About the decolonization of the garden.

Something seems to be in the air. A few days before I visited On the Nature of Botanical Gardens, Contemporary Indonesian Perspectives at Framer Framed, filmmaker Laura Huertas Millan gave a lecture at the Netherlands Film Academy. She discussed, among other things, the film *Journey To A Land Otherwise Known* (2011), which turned out to deal (partly) with the same theme: the decolonization of botanical gardens. Where Millan focused on the way in which the Lille Botanical Garden is linked to the colonization of Latin America, On the Nature of Botanical Gardens focuses on the way in which botanical gardens function as 'living archives' of Indonesia's Dutch rule. Nine Indonesian artists offer a variety of perspectives through videos, installations and paintings.

One of the two large paintings featured in the exhibition is Zico Albaiquni's *Reciting Rites in its Sites* (2019), which shows a garden-like landscape in bright colors with, among other things, stones, rice baskets, a pavilion, a circle dance and some old-fashioned dressed figures hanging around between gravestones. The exhibition text indicates that the work shows different historical layers of the Kebun Raya Bogor (known in colonial times as Lands Botanic Garden in Buitenzorg). For example, we see the Sundanese roughatan cleansing ritual performed in this garden, a statue of Hindi deity Nandi and the former Dutch cemetery. According to the local spiritual community, planted bamboo would ensure that the Dutch spirits are calmed. The work also appears to be a commentary on Herman de Vries' exhibition *Basic Values*, which was shown in Framer Framed in 2016. de Vries then showed different types of rice as an example of the organic wealth of Java. However, he ignored the fact that rice is a sacred good in the Sundanese tradition and based on Dutch literature and photo albums from the 1950s that confirmed the romantic image that many Dutch people have of Indonesia, Albaiquni states. Several works make clear with political gestures that the consequences of colonialism still live on.



Overview photo of the exhibition On the Nature of Botanical Gardens, curated by Sadih Boonstra, Framer Framed (2020). © Eva Broekema / Framer Framed