@ ROYALACA DEMYANTWER POARDEN METCOWE MEEKIL DAYS + HOURS CARDENING SESSIONS

CARDEN SISTIDDIWAS

J H I

The word for garden before garden was

The Academy Garden is new to me, and I have to find my way in, just like everyone else who is new to this place. I'm the newcomer here, the one who still needs to learn the local language and who wants to belong to this community of people, trees, water, fungi, seeds, mosses, branches, snails, beetles, and many more other gardeners. Some of them welcome me and others turn their back on me with shiny wings. The soil is a multitude of organisms, materials, liquids, minerals, mycorrhiza, and bacteria, all moving along while the planet moves as well. It looks so stable to the city. The spillover effect from a small me, grounded, yet everything is moving. place into the wider area means we can

Some people prefer to leave nature alone, because nature knows what is best. In Dutch this is called 'klapstoelbeheer', freely translated as 'folding chair management'. But doing nothing after

changed the climate is not enough. We are losing habitat because of intensive changes in nature. We can all help nature in our gardens, we can restore habitat, instead of acting against it. Around our folding chair we can grow wildflowers, long grasses, and trees for birds, we can mow the lawn just once a year and enjoy a little wilderness.

we ruined the soil with chemicals and

Restoring nature is about creating an overspill. With every cluster of healthy plants, more seeds get dispersed across increase local biodiversity. The Academy Garden patches exist as tiny ecology labs, they are in a healthy condition and together with their surroundings they get better all the time.

alize I feel a love for plants in a very similar way. Haraway writes about working animals and she inspires me to think of working plants, growing in lines in the farmer's fields. We're all working together. The question is who decides on the working conditions, who can choose what? Sympoiesis means 'making together';

it comes from the book Staying with the Trouble by Donna Haraway. When we Royal Academy of Fine Arts Antwerp, garden on my own. A garden is always the result of all kinds of little and big organisms working together. In the historical garden and in the secret new garden grounds of the Royal Academy, students and artists work towards restoring

This garden project is inspired by the books, ideas, and string figures of Donna

Haraway. Her love for dogs made me re-

ecology from a non-human-centred perspective. We focus on diversity in plants, soil, critters, patches, views, and techtalk about The Sympoiesis Garden at the niques. We try to decolonize the garden by taking up a multicultural and non-'I' becomes 'we', because I can't make a binary practice. Gardening is at the very essence of world-making where ideas and the real soil make sense together.

NEW FLYERS

PLEASE TAKE ONE

COMMUNITY GARDEN

Royal Academy of Fine Arts Antwerp

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Antwerp, Belgium).

Applied Sciences and Arts) between 2022 Academy of Fine Arts (AP University of conducted by Eline De Clerq at the Royal project 'Royal Academy Antwerp Garden' This publication is part of the research

Arts Antwerp (Mutsaardstraat 31, 2000

Track Report documents research in the

Academy Garden and these are part of

All images are provided by the Royal

on canvas, 40.0x31.8cm each 2012.

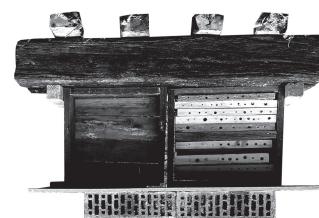
© Yoko Enoki, Toxic Garden diptych, oil

arts at the Royal Academy of Fine



first (and always) how to decolonize the garden. there cannot be any progress if we don't ask ourselves extracting from others. From her, I learned that industrial complex is all about profit for some, while the importance of ownership, and how our agro-Gender Equality). During this talk Gazdallah explained nised by CHanGE (Campaign for Sexual Health and In 2022, I met Fairouz Gazdallah during a talk orga-A garden string figure with Fairouz

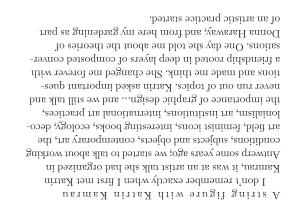
of the city of Antwerp, we cannot relocate the entire city. live there. Similarly, when PFOS is in the groundwater on Tokyo, it is impossible to relocate all the people who bit of awareness helps. When radiation in the rain falls to put into numbers, lives, stories, or memories but every clear fallout. The disaster in Fukushima is impossible un eldizivni na ni aera edt to straq emoz beqqib niat edt of the plants on her balcony after learning about how Fukushima, located north of Tokyo. Yoko made a diptych quake and the tsunami with the nuclear disaster in moved back to Tokyo. 2011 was the year of the big earthleft Antwerp where she got her Master in Fine Arts and ting. We would visit each other sometimes after she anger, persistence, and putting the impossible into a painin the north of Tokyo. Yoko's work is about care, love, In the summer of 2011, I stayed at Yoko Enoki's home A garden string figure with Yoko Enoki



ced to become something they are normally not. wild plants instead of the cultivated plants that were forsixteen. Since our friendship my work has focused on tuin - which he started to create when he was only overlooked plants. Joris guided me through his Natuura genius idea, such care and appreciation for these of plants most people try to get out of their garden. What gardener would buy these weeds, as these are the kind They immediately got my attention, because no 'serious' plants to raise awareness among city garden owners. were selling potted greater Celandine among other wild day at dusk in the Sint-Paulusplaats in Antwerp. They Some years ago I met Joris and Pieter-Jan on a rainy A garden string figure with Joris Thoné

join this community. On Instagram you can find us at students, staff, researchers, and alumni are welcome to ecology within the gardens of the Royal Academy. All The garden group meets weekly to garden and restore

who asked us to do this? work is unpaid. Should everything we do be paid for and underappreciated. The interesting bit is why all this not paid to study, and not paid to garden. They felt a bit questions, art students are not paid for making art, other than the gardening itself. At first there were some are anonymous gardeners, unpaid and without rewards names of the students participating in the garden. They In this text, as well as in our other texts, you don't see stnabuts adt dtiw arugit gairts A



in the ecology of the Academy. Thank you! work. Roel keeps the door open for us to make a change and to ask everyone to have faith; we will try to make this ring projects is how to visualize what is not yet visible an art practice. Perhaps the hardest part of most pioneenew community garden and recognizing this work as and created a nice loop for us by giving his support to our ture. He knotted the two ends of the string together more, with roots in art history and a deep interest in na-Roel is a curator, an educator, a writer, and so much home of fertile compost feeding this pioneering project. Ecology at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts Antwerp, a Arkesteijn, the head of the new research group Art & A generous person in this string figure game is Roel A garden string figure with Roel Arkesteijn

drink nectar in spring and we can make a fertilizing new home in the Academy Garden, where bumblebees lots of critters and fungi. We gave the Symphytum a logs, an important infusion of life and a good habitat for for a building project. We took the old decomposing burg community garden, which was being demolished In March, we organized a rescue mission to the Silsofficinale or Common Comfrey A garden string figure with Symphytum

tried to create a good condition and hoped that the plants expected: you can't force a plant to grow, instead we taught me about plants in a far more sensible way than new sprouts in the little pots filled with soil. Marc ditions all over the world. My first job was to scout for pecialized piants, naturally adapted to currous coneye for wild plants. The greenhouse is home to highly he combines botanics, horticulture, and an aesthetic We met in the greenhouse that is under his care, where man in the botanical garden in Chent, the Plantentuin. In 1999, or possibly 2000, I met Marc Libert, plants-

A garden string figure with Marc Libert

passed on by generations creating and recreating a tool for a different thinking practice, a very old game plants, fungi, soil, water, landscapes, and histories. It's making stories between humans and other animals, different shapes. The string figure ties knots in worldholding a loop of string and picking up the thread in telling, ideas are remembered by a pattern made by from her books. A string figure is an old means of storyresponse-ability and the string figure – SF – all come poiesis, speculative fabulation, queer kinship, critters, are rooted in the thinking of Donna Haraway. Sym-Many of the ideas we put into practice in the garden paws, branches, wings, roots, and more garden is a game played by many hands,

SF or the string figure in this community

together to create the multi-species community garden.

a garden string figure where many stories are knotted

about a 'companion practice'. What follows here is

thoughts and figures. String figures, for Haraway, are

us at @royalacademyantwerpgarden to join this community. On Instagram you can find All students, staff, researchers and alumni are welcome ecology within the gardens of the Royal Academy. The garden group meets weekly to garden and restore



How do we garden when we don't want to put humans first? Can we give everyone involved agency? Who are we in this garden? Whenever possible we let plants choose where they want to grow, by themselves or with a little help by bringing in seeds. When plants need the garden. rescuing (like from a building site) we give them a new home according to their conditions and without trying to design a garden from our perspective. We observe how insects, birds, seedlings, and more behave and we try to respect their

needs. We give water when the climate

is too dry. Climate change is accelerated by human activities, the least we can do is to try and help nature to survive our induced changes. We clean up trash, we recycle materials, we leave places in rest, we enjoy listening and looking at



The word for colonialism before coloni-

alism was colonialism Sometimes I can't find the right word because the word means something else. To garden means to cut, plant, mow, bend, prune, sow, pluck, pick, pot, tile, transport, saw, extract, buy, lift, dig, graft, and many more words that could just as well be used at plantations during ultra-colonial times. The word for colonialism during colonialism was colonialism. The word was derived from the Latin for farming. It was a legal practice of extraction, contested by many but at the time approved of by politics. The word can no longer be used in common conversation without the unspoken garden. horror. The word for garden was garden. We already used this word long before

gardening became a practice of killing nature. Now the word garden can mean soil fertilisation, turf extraction, killing of weeds, production of pesticides, industrial nurseries, cultivating chemically altered flowers, cutting the wilderness to bring green lawns. This gardening is far removed from how the first people gathered wild oats and they realized the spilled oats germinated and grew new oats closer to their home, next to the beans and the nut tree. Push seeds into the soil, smell the oily herbs, feel the soft leaves, look at the colourful flowers, eat the berries, and rest in the shade of a tree. Their home was probably in their















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Garden fences are usually about defences, to protect

what we care for. A garden is full of fences, from the

gate (locked at some time PM) to the ropes around the patches, to the sticks to keep the pigeons from pecking

at the snowdrops. This string figure protects and con-

nects, it invites the visitors to have a look at the project. A garden string figure with Bombus or

A supportive fence, a SF

bumblebee Within the Bombini family, some of these furry little social animals have strong warning colours. The colour

codes are shared between different bumblebee species within a region to the mutually protective effect to resemble each other. Bumblebees are important pollinators and they are in decline because of habitat loss and pesticides. In the old garden the Bombus lapidarius or redtailed bumblebee queen was one of the first to be seen in spring. She will nest with up to fifty worker bumblebees in a matriarchal community.

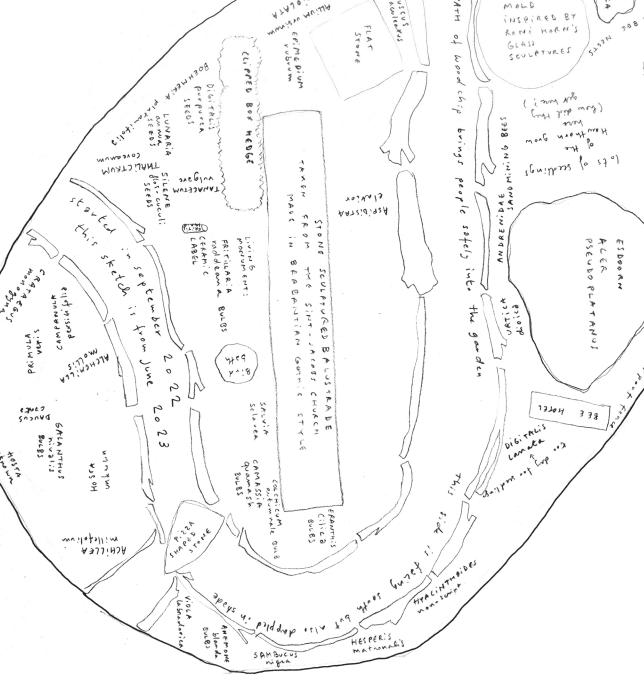
& Maren Rommerskirchen Based in Antwerp since 2018, Kristí Fekete (she/her) is a graphic designer and teacher. Raised bilingually, Hungarian and Slovakian, language is one root of Kristí's fascination of semiotics, she has a dual practice as a

A garden string figure with Kristí Fekete

designer and writer. Maren Rommerskirchen (she/her) is driven by a constant curiosity for new things. Her projects focus on

printed media, visual identities, and scenographic spaces while using typography as a main design element. Kristí & Maren work together as freelance designers.

We first met when I joined the Donna Haraway reading group at the Royal Academy. This article is a string figure in itself, the work of many; Kristí & Maren are working with us to create this text and image combination into an artistic design.



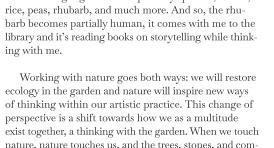
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On gardening together as an artistic

This research is about art and ecology: the focus is how an ecology works within the Academy. How can students connect to nature? How do the trees connect our gardening? We hope to create a better environment with more habitat for the rapidly declining wild species. We also hope that students become artists with a real sense of nature, something valuable to find a proper response to climate change. The most important part of this project is the change in thinking students can experience, the garden as a contact zone changes how we think and who we are thinking with. We want to make an important shift in which ideas we use to think other ideas with, a real response-ability.

about this in the garden, we are plant killers. To eat I understood anything about symbiosis it is this, we are becoming together. I am partially spinach, fennel, rice, peas, rhubarb, and much more. And so, the rhubarb becomes partially human, it comes with me to the library and it's reading books on storytelling while think-

ecology in the garden and nature will inspire new ways of thinking within our artistic practice. This change of perspective is a shift towards how we as a multitude nature, nature touches us, and the trees, stones, and compost help us to make sense in the light of climate change.



When we arrive in the garden the garden is already there, there is history, there is soil, there are trees that already live their entire life in this garden. Here is with this environment? How do the birds connect with a multitudinous outnumbering us. Often research starts with defining the concepts, but here we don't want to define the garden. It's the other way around: we become

We garden in patches and restore ecology under the old trees. The garden patches are a direct reference, both in name and ecology, to the 'patchyness' introduced by Anna Tsing in her book The Mushroom at the End of the World.² This book explains the assemblages and translations at work in a global market, and how people can look after forests with different effects. The garden I eat plants every day, how can I be so cruel? We joked patches we work in are visible communities living within the Academy grounds, the trees, worms, fungi, and all something is to become something, but not all of it. If other living species show what a 'local' patch means in a natural environment, as opposed to national borders.

