

Garden Futures Designing with Nature



Exhibition Concept

**Vitra
Design
Museum**



Contents

↗ The Exhibition	4
Paradise	8
Garden Politics	10
Testing Grounds	14
The World as a Garden	18
↗ Facts	20
↗ Installation Shots	22
↗ Video	34

The Exhibition

Gardens reflect identities, dreams, and visions. Deeply rooted in their culture, they can unfold immense symbolic potential. The recent revival of horticulture has focused less on the garden as a romantic refuge than as a place where concepts of social justice, biodiversity, and sustainability can be tried and tested. The exhibition »Garden Futures« at the Vitra Design Museum explores the history and future of modern gardens. Where do today's garden ideals come from? Will gardens help us achieve a liveable future for everyone? The exhibition addresses these questions using a broad range of examples from design, everyday culture, and landscape architecture – from deckchairs to vertical urban farms, from contemporary community gardens to living buildings to gardens by designers and artists including Roberto Burle Marx, Mien Ruys, and Derek Jarman. The exhibition architecture was designed by the Italian design duo Formafantasma.

COVER:
Key Visual, Illustration: Lorenz Klingebiel and Dominik Krauss;
based on the photo: Les Jardins de Marqueyssac, Dordogne,
France

PREVIOUS PAGE:
Debre Ensesa, South Gondar, 2018

OPPOSITE PAGE:
James Wines, Drawing of the Highrise of Homes
(theoretical project), 1981, Collection Jonathan Holtzman



**»In the garden,
society finds itself.«**

Piet Oudolf

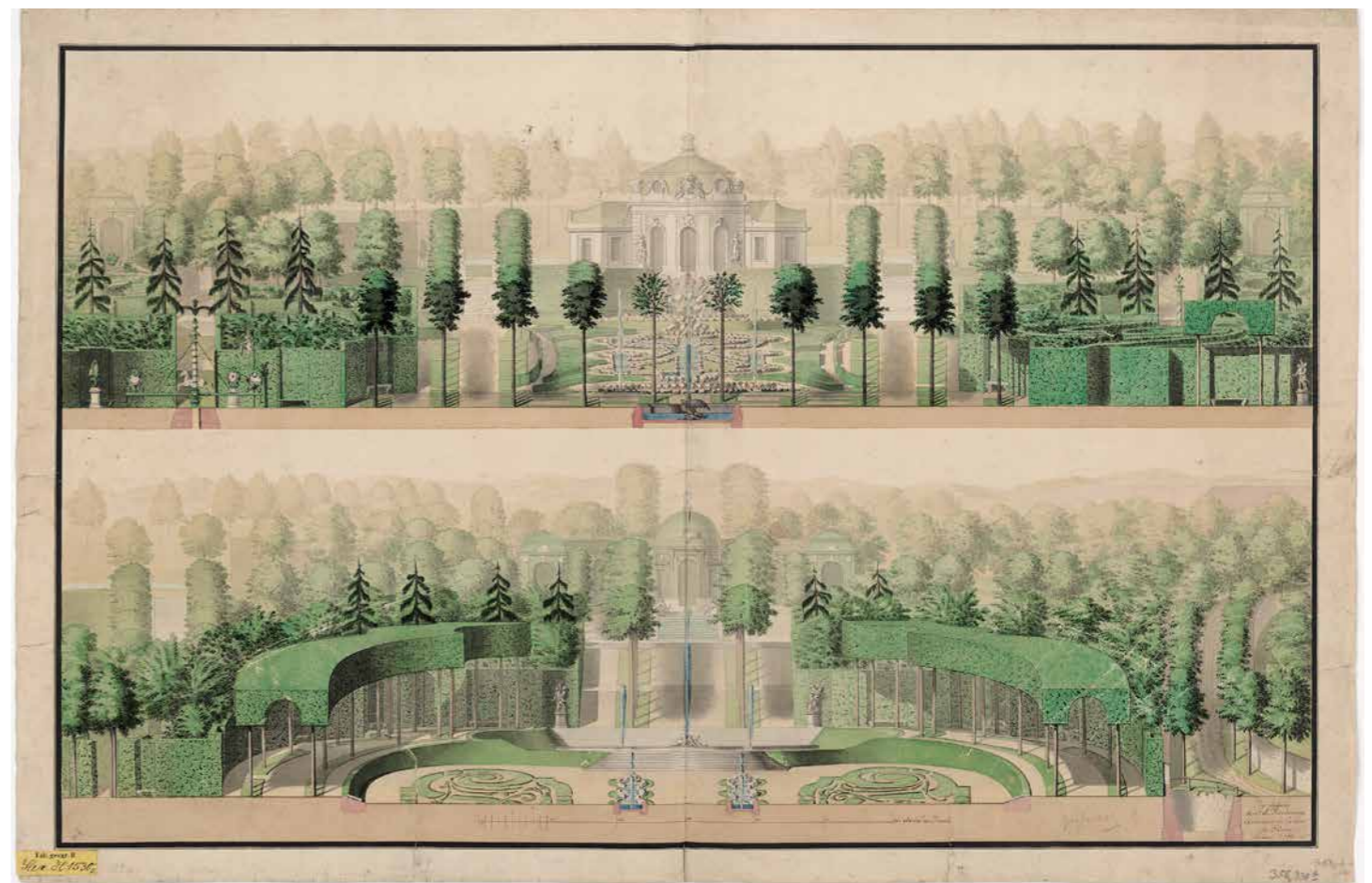


Paradise



The garden has always been more than just a physical space, but a space in which to project hopes for a better future: this becomes apparent in paintings, drawings, and photographs from a wide range of historical periods and global contexts. Many religions celebrate the Garden of Eden as an – albeit unattainable – symbol of human bliss. Antique oriental rugs depict oases of abundance; the medieval »hortus conclusus« promised shelter and spiritual sanctuary from the wilderness beyond. Wherever people stake out a piece of nature to create a garden, its layout and design reveal much about their motives and ideology.

The first room in the exhibition opens up an extensive panorama of garden ideals. A media installation combines stunning examples from all around the world with impressions, experiences, and memories recounted by art historians and landscape architects, artists and garden designers, philosophers and allotment gardeners from various cultural backgrounds. The garden emerges as an idealized space that pervades our daily lives as well as our imaginations. Our approach to designing, using, and tending it reveals much about how we perceive our own place in the world.



PREVIOUS PAGE:
Sissinghurst Castle Garden, Kent, designed by poet and gardener Vita Sackville-West and her husband Harold Nicolson in the 1930s

ABOVE:
Upper Rhenish Master, The Little Garden of Paradise, c. 1410–1420, Collection Städel Museum, Frankfurt am Main, Germany

OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP TO BOTTOM:
Romaine Laprade, The Gardens of Marqueyssac, Vézac, France, 2020 (designed by Julien de Cervai in the 1860s)
Friedrich August Krubsacius, Design for an unknown garden, 1760

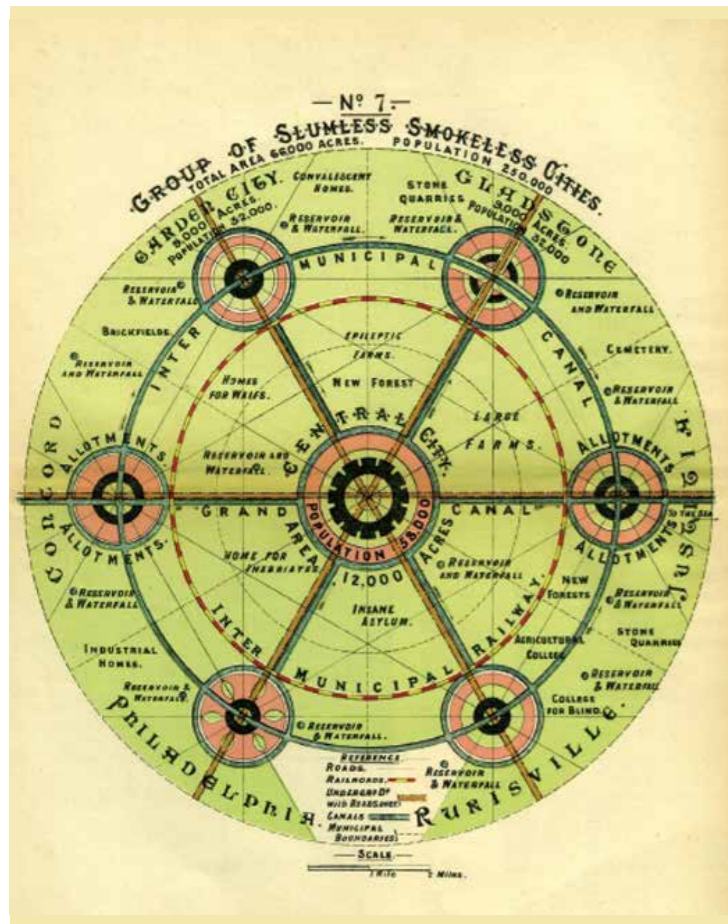


Room 2

Garden Politics

The idyll is deceptive! Gardens are less of a refuge and more of a battlefield than we perhaps thought. Our garden ideals – which we always believed to be personal – have long been shaped by influences both political and commercial. Exactly whose interests are manifested in gardens becomes apparent on closer inspection of the objects of garden history.

After the grand panorama of the first room, the second room affords a closer look at select stories around the political and social context of gardening and garden design. Who should own a garden and how is it to be integrated into the urban fabric? These are questions to which many different planning concepts have sought to give answers. In times of crisis, governments might declare the cultivation of vegetables a patriotic duty, while citizens with grievances have often wielded spades to lend emphasis to their demand for a say or for sustenance. Many an exotic flowerbed has deep roots in the history of colonialism, and what the dream of a luxuriant but easy-to-maintain recreational paradise should look like is determined not just by gardeners, but also by designers staging their colourful garden products.



OPPOSITE PAGE, CLOCKWISE:
Wardian cases used for the shipment of plants from the Botanic Garden in Buitenzorg (now Bogor), West Java, 1913
Hans Aeschbach, Advertisement for LONZA fertilizer, 1960
Ebenezer Howard, Diagram of the garden city concept published in his book »To-Morrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform«, 1898

ABOVE:
J. Howard Miller, Poster for the Westinghouse War Production Co-Ordinating Committee, c. 1942



»The garden is the smallest parcel of the world and then it is the totality of the world.«

Michel Foucault



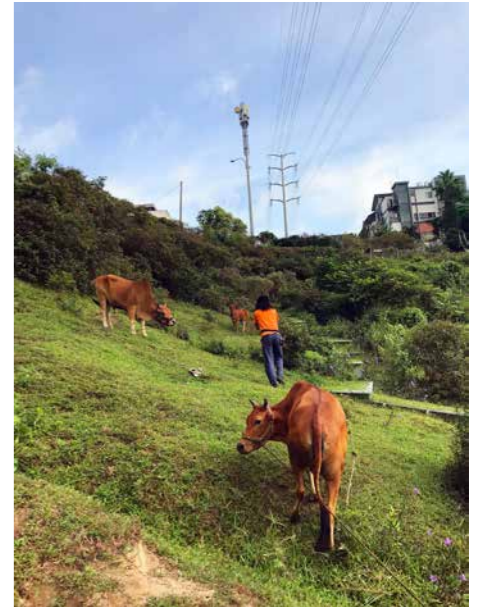
Room 3

Testing Grounds

How do we go about designing a garden, and why do we do it? What is it that drives us, which ideals do we follow, and what guides our decisions? The case studies brought together in the third part of the exhibition illustrate a range of possible answers to these questions.

»Brazilian landscape architect Roberto Burle Marx won international acclaim not only for his designs, but also for his conservation work. The plant compositions by contemporary Dutch garden designer Piet Oudolf paint undulating and ever-changing fields of colour. The extensive Liao Garden designed by Chinese artist Zheng Guogu draws on the aesthetic of the ›Age of Empires‹ video game and thus builds a bridge between virtual and real environments. A community garden created in the Malaysian capital of Kuala Lumpur stands for bottom-up initiatives in urban contexts. And the writing by Jamaica Kincaids show how one's own garden can become a place of confronting history.«

While each reveals a different approach to gardens and gardening, however, there is something they all have in common: for the individuals and communities introduced here, the garden is a testing ground for dreams and for visions, a place for confronting historical and political realities, for coming to terms with life, winning insights, and redefining how we relate to our environment. Invariably, gardens are places of learning – never completed, forever growing. The gardens presented here do not provide miniature worlds or idyllic escapes; instead, they are prototypes of hope, and each new bud can mean that the world is changing for the better.



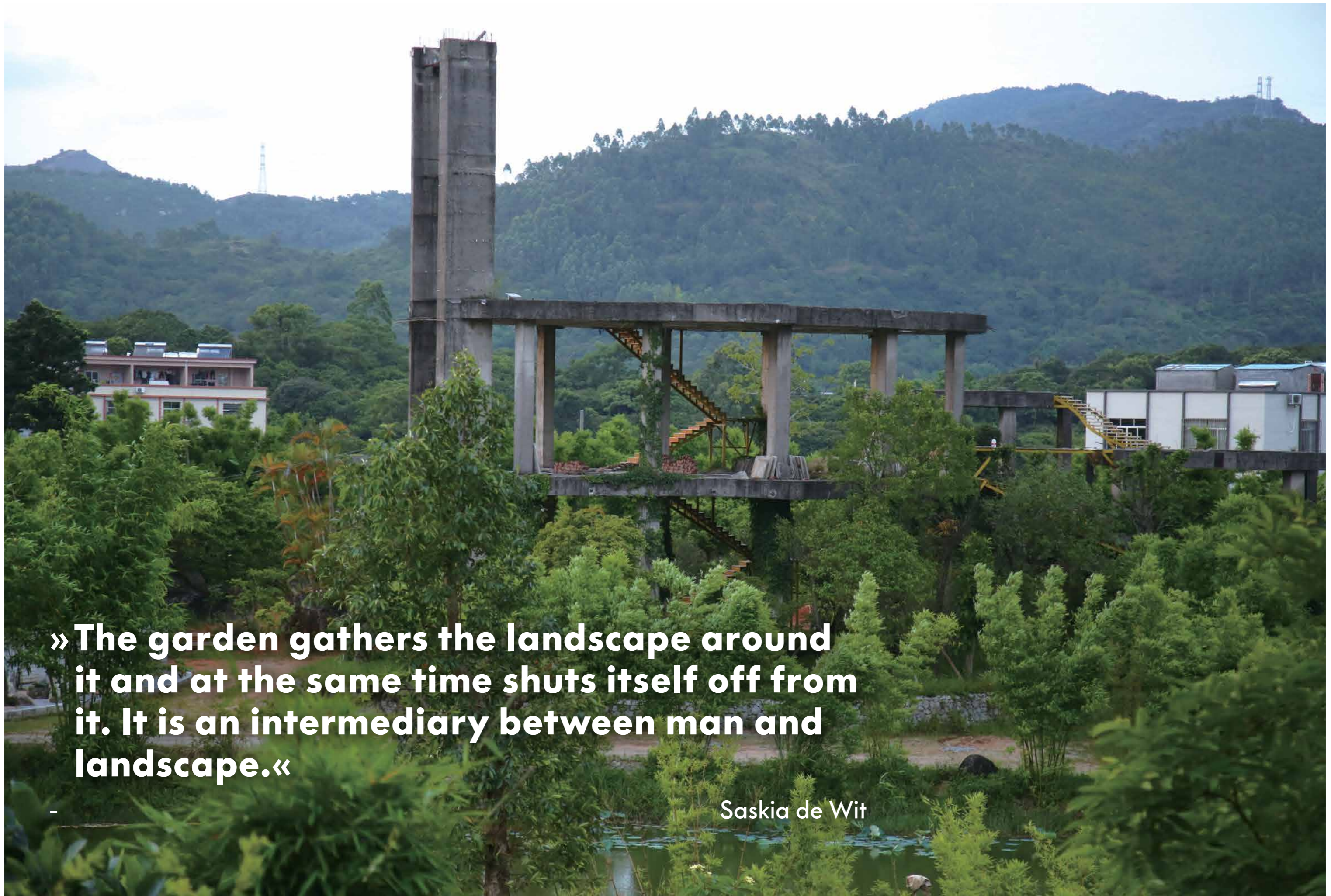
PREVIOUS PAGE:
Lalage Snow, Mohammad Kabir in the Duralaman Palace Garden, Kabul, Afghanistan, September 2012

OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP TO BOTTOM:
Kebun-Kebun Bangsar Community Garden, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 2017

Derek Jarman, Prospect Cottage Garden at Dungeness, Kent, UK, designed from 1986

Roberto Burle Marx and Haruyoshi Ono at the Burle Marx landscape studio, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, early 1990s

ABOVE:
Kebun-Kebun Bangsar Community Garden, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 2017



» The garden gathers the landscape around it and at the same time shuts itself off from it. It is an intermediary between man and landscape.«

Saskia de Wit

The World as a Garden



Gardens have always been seen as a sanctuary in which to create a domesticated version of the wild nature beyond. Today, however, the entire planet that has been impinged upon or affected by human activity. And we are bound to ask: who needs protection from whom?

The question that now exercises the minds of designers, planners, and researchers is this: if we cannot avoid having an influence, might not that influence be made less

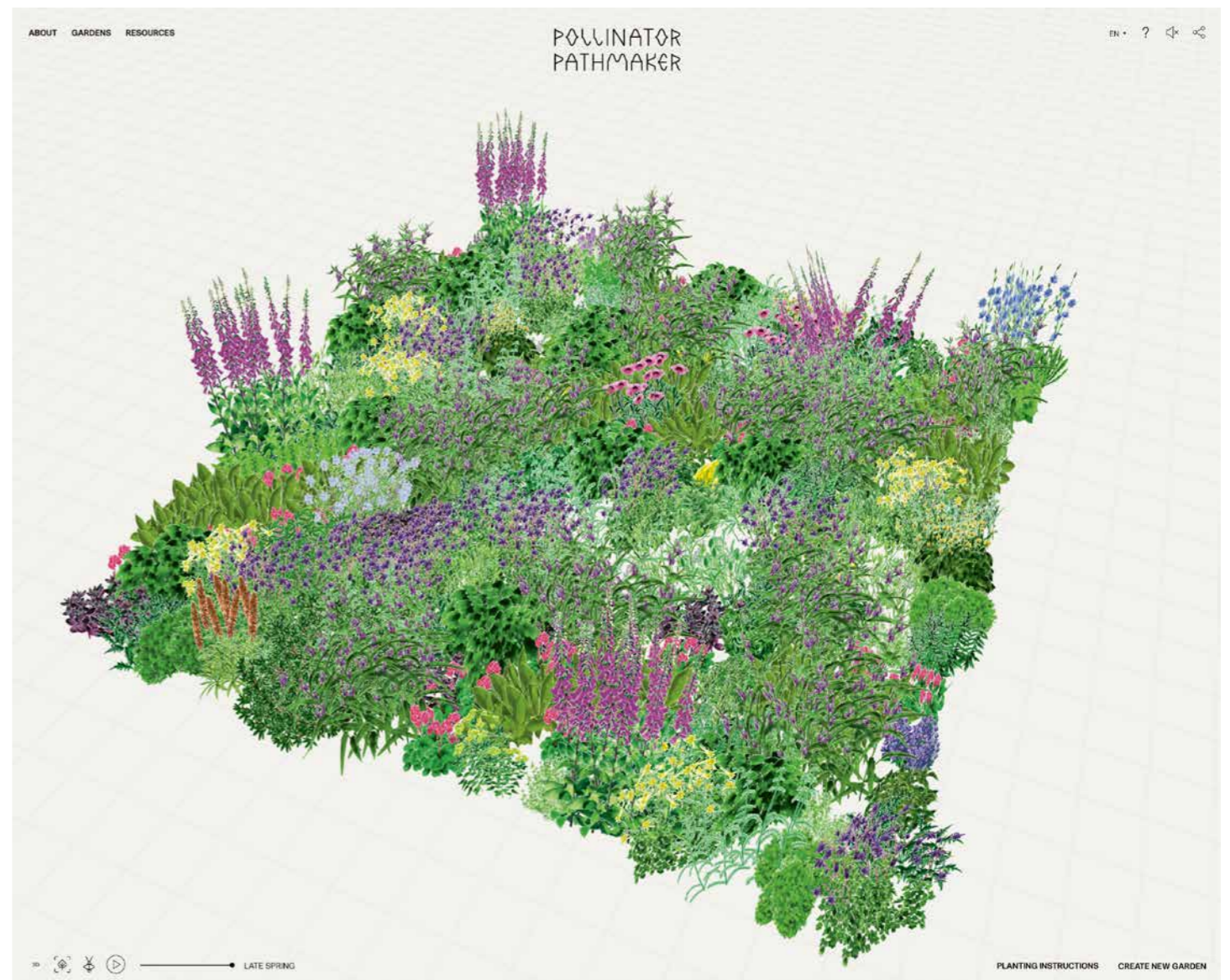
destructive or even turned into a positive one? What if we understand our environment as a garden - a place to care for and even to grant its own agency? The projects shown in this room bring this idea to life. They demonstrate that the garden fence is outmoded, at least metaphorically speaking. The idea of a refuge just for ourselves is ousted by the concept of a garden that permeates our cities and communities, offering equitable and ecological spaces for people, plants, and animals alike.

PREVIOUS PAGE:
Zheng Guogu, Liao Garden, Yangjiang, China, designed from 2000

ABOVE:
De Zwarte Hond (master plan), Felixx (landscape architecture) and A Food Forestry (food forest planning), Rijnvliet Edible Neighbourhood, Leidsche Rijn near Utrecht, 2021

OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP TO BOTTOM:
Salmon Creek Farm, Mendocino Coast, California, since 1971 and again since 2014

Alexandra Daisy Ginsberg, Pollinator Pathmaker, 2023 (online tool)



Facts

Exhibits

Design objects, art pieces, drawings, posters, furniture, tools, film, and photography

Curators

Vitra Design Museum:
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Nieuwe Instituut:
Marten Kuijpers, Maria Heinrich

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Exhibition Tour

»Garden Futures: Designing with Nature« is available to international venues until approximately 2028. The exhibition travels including all exhibits, contextual films and images, exhibition architecture and all media equipment.

Exhibition floor space

600 – 1,000 m² / 6,000 – 10,000 sq ft

Dates

Vitra Design Museum, Weil am Rhein
25 March 2023 – 3 October 2023

Design Museum Helsinki and
Museum of Finnish Architecture
10 November 2023 – 31 March 2024

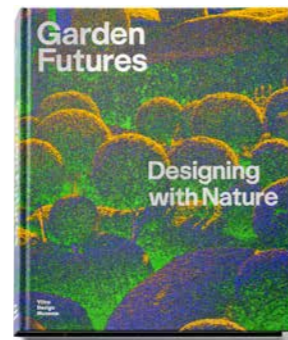
Vandalorum, Värnamo
27 April 2024 – 13 October 2024

Nieuwe Instituut, Rotterdam
15 November 2024 – March 2025

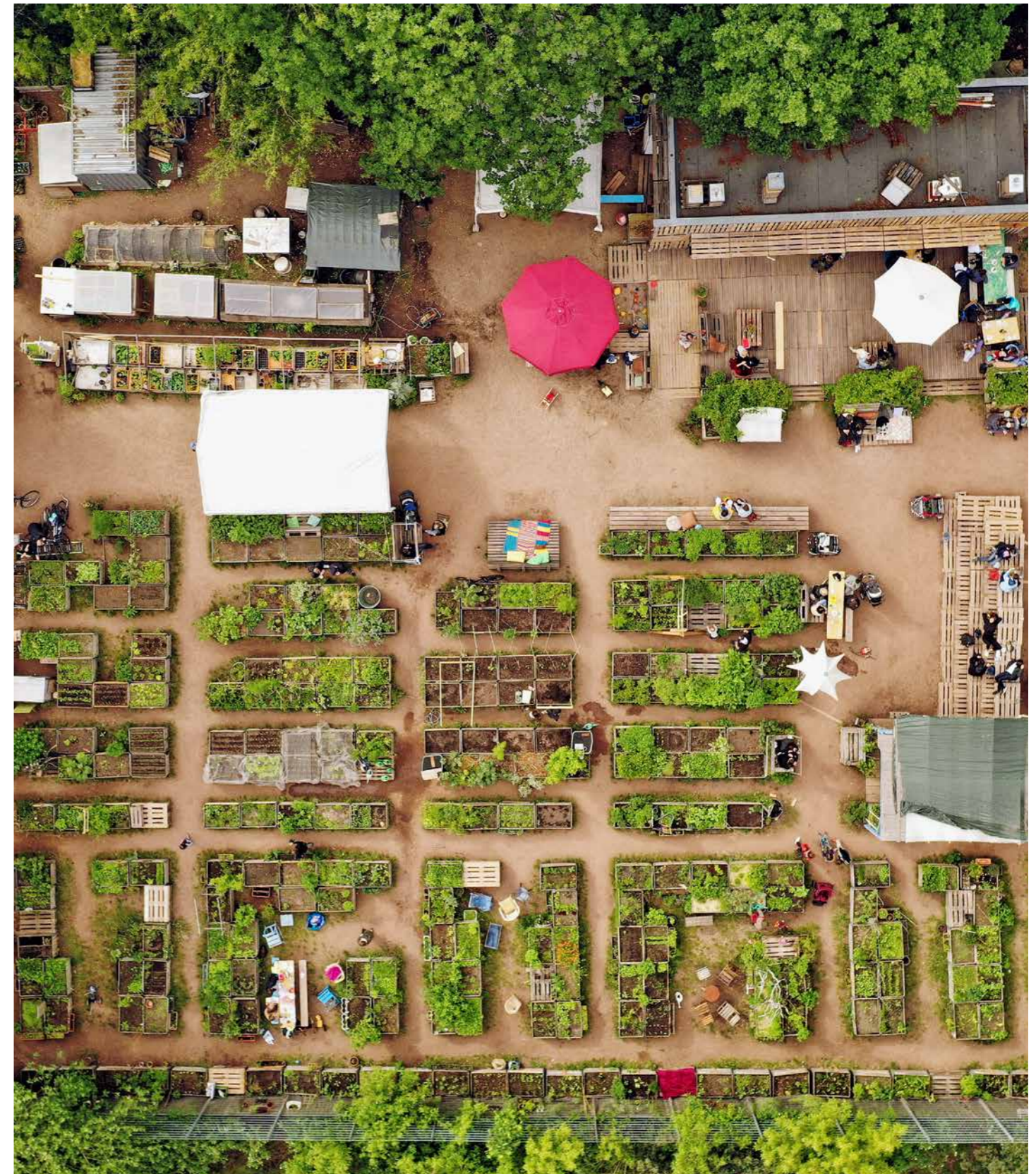
V&A Dundee
April 2025 – December 2025

Publication

The exhibition is accompanied by an extensive book published by the Vitra Design Museum, and the Wüstenrot Foundation.



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Above: Aerial photograph of the community garden Himmelbeet, Berlin-Wedding, 2021
Back page: Willy Guhl, Garden Chair for Eternit AG, 1954

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An exhibition by the Vitra Design Museum,
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Vitra
Design
Museum

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Seit 1921

GARDENA

Installation Shots







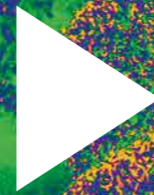






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**Vitra Design Museum
25.03.2023 – 03.10.2023**





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