



On the Necessity of Gardening An ABC of Art, Botany and Cultivation

Laurie Cluitmans (b. 1984, NL) works as a curator of contemporary art for the Centraal Museum in Utrecht and is also an independent art critic. In 2016 she received the Prize for Young Art Criticism for her essay on the garden by Derek Jarman and Ian Hamilton Finlay.

On the Necessity of Gardening appears simultaneous with the exhibition The botanical revolution, on the necessity of art and gardening that will be on view from 11 September 2021 to 9 January 2022 in the Centraal Museum in Utrecht (NL). The publication is categorically not an exhibition catalogue, but is positioned as an autonomous project. Both the exhibition and publication stem from a longer-term research by Laurie Cluitmans into the development of the cultural-historical, philosophical and social significance of the garden in relation to our current way of life.

For centuries, the garden has been regarded as a mirror of society, a microcosm, in which the broader relationships between nature and culture are played out on small scale. From this long cultural tradition also raises a call for a new awareness of our relationship with the Earth.

On the Necessity of Gardening tells the story of the garden as a rich source of inspiration. Over the centuries, artists, writers, poets and thinkers have each described, depicted and designed the garden in different ways. In medieval art, the garden was a reflection of paradise, a place of harmony and fertility, shielded from worldly problems. However, the garden is not just a neutral place and intended solely for personal pastime, it is a place where the world manifests itself and where the relationship between culture and nature is expressed. In the eighteenth century this image shifted: the garden became a symbol of worldly power and politics. The Anthropocene, the era in which man completely dominates nature with disastrous consequences, is forcing us to radically rethink the role we have given nature in recent decades.

There is a renewed interest in the theme of the garden among contemporary makers. It is not a romantic desire that drives them, but rather a call for a new awareness of our relationship with the earth, by connecting different fields of activity in landscape, art and culture. Through many different essays and an extensive abecedarium, On the Necessity of Gardening reflects on the garden as a metaphor for society, through concepts such as

botanomania and capitalocene, from guerrilla gardening to queer ecology and zen garden.

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