



*the ratio of an earthworm*

Sunday, September 2, 2018 from 3-7

14 Randolph Avenue, Toronto

*the ratio of an earthworm* is a one-day, outdoor exhibition and gathering, co-organized by Patrick Cruz and Larissa Tiggelers. The participating artists directly and indirectly cultivate practices concerned with labour, focused consciousness, and acts of care.

Exhibition Text

*Garden Paradox* by Larissa Tiggelers

Art and gardening are antidotes to skepticism and indifference. Artists and gardeners transform space and material through time and attention, and those processes and their results create opportunities for sensorial escape.

As in many of today's gardens, leisure and minor food production were the focus of plant curation in our oldest form of gardening, the forest garden. The first enclosures of outdoor space appeared in 10,000 BC, and although no one knows the specific details of these West Asian gardens, historians envision the purpose was to act as obstacles for animals and brigands. Outside spaces of beauty and independent food production came after this original need for fortification. Our contemporary gardens offer a different kind of fortification, protecting spaces of authenticity and carefulness.

One of the most famous and, for a time, safest gardens in fiction was also the site of the first love triangle, involving Adam, Eve, and a snake. Two of these actors were blamed for putting an end to Eden's heavenly breezes, golden fruit, and crystalline streams; following the fruit debacle, the Bible recast both Eve and the serpent as symbols of demonic power and chaos. Yet for most cultures snakes symbolize fertility and transformation—they are wise goddesses that give and take life. Consequently, the Garden of Eden and others can be seen as sites of regeneration and rebirth.

Voltaire was reportedly born under the now extinct Zodiac sign of Ophiuchus (from the Greek Ophioukhos; "serpent-bearer") and later in his life he cultivated an impressive private garden. In his satiric novel, *Candide*, Voltaire's characters use garden metaphors to reflect the social and political discourse of the day,

“... for when man was put into the Garden of Eden, it was with an intent to dress it: and this proves that man was not born to be idle ... Work then without disputing, it is the only way to render life supportable.”

The gardens in *Candide* present collective labour as a solution to collective ills. By working the soil, we not only provide for and protect ourselves, but also ameliorate our souls. Gardens are spaces of compassion, and they represent nature's capacity for symbolism, mystery, and romance.

For one afternoon, let's pretend everything will work out for the best. Let's allow the garden to alleviate the anxiety of personal responsibility. Let's focus on narrow plots, not wide systemic issues. After all, aren't artists and plants both sentient beings? Don't we all need to occasionally turn our faces to the sun?