



## Jardin de la Connaissance 100Landschaftsarchitektur Thilo Folkerts + Rodney LaTourelle

The *Jardin de la Connaissance* is a temporary garden conceived for the International Garden Festival at Les Jardins de Métis.<sup>1</sup> It consists of multi-coloured wooden boards, a number of cultivated mushrooms, and some 40,000 books that form walls, benches, and carpets. Based on an open compositional principle, these elements are assembled to create a garden space that is integrated with both the site and structure of the forest.

Celebrating book culture as an ongoing process of shaping, aestheticizing, and distributing information, the *Jardin de la Connaissance* (or *Garden of Cognition*) does not illustrate the book's "return to nature" or attempt a biblical reconciliation. It does, however, engage with the mythical relation between knowledge and nature integral to the concept of "paradise," which has been a primary reference for the garden throughout history. The "tree of knowledge" has today become a forest: a plenitude of multimedia and an overwhelming world of information. By using books as material in the construction of the garden, we confront these instruments of knowledge with the temporality of nature. Transformation and disintegration destabilize the supposed timeless value of the book.

The composition of the book-volumes is structured with brightly coloured wood plates, which bind the individual stacks together. Over time, the artificial colours of these elements will contrast the graying tones of the exposed paper in the books and the surrounding forest. Overall, the orthogonal organization is reminiscent of a typical Neo-Plastic composition from the early 20th century, invoking an optimistic orientation based on "primary" elements. And yet, this "utopian" notion is countered by the gradual decomposition of the paper material. We have tried to implement the concept of transformation as the garden's primary aesthetic structure. Several varieties of edible mushrooms are cultivated on the books. These accentuate the transformative process of the literally fixed knowledge, invoking the semantics of cultural and natural wisdom. By visualizing decay as a lifecycle segment, knowledge is exemplified as a process.

The books in the garden are surplus books, supplied by local public libraries and school institutions. There is a wide variety of sizes, formats and genres: from romance novels to religious texts, science to education books, thrillers, and encyclopedias. Most of the books have been waiting as recycling material in storage spaces in advance of an increase in paper pulp prices (which did not take place). The discarded and exposed books remind the visitor, sometimes surprisingly, sometimes painfully, that both natural processes and the book as medium are systems of reproduction. Knowledge is never to be had without effort and cultivation—

it requires the preparation of a seeding ground to generate and be created anew. The *Jardin de la*

Thilo Folkerts is a landscape architect who designs, experiments, and constructs. He also pursues his interest in the unique language of gardens as an author, editor, and translator. He founded the office 100Landschaftsarchitektur in Berlin in 2007. He has realized temporary and permanent projects internationally since 1997.

Rodney LaTourelle is a Canadian artist, writer, and designer based in Berlin. His artistic approach is informed by his education in architecture and landscape architecture. His site-specific installations have been exhibited internationally, including the National Gallery of Canada; the University of Quebec, Montreal; MUDAM, Luxembourg; and Plug in ICA, Winnipeg.

### Technical Data

Garden site: ca. 250 m<sup>2</sup>  
ca. 40,000 books – 30–40 tonnes  
Building budget: CAD\$20,000  
Mushrooms: *Coprinus comatus* (Shaggy Mane),  
*Grifola frondosa* (Hen of the Woods, Maitake),  
*Pleurotus citrinopileatus* (Golden Oyster),

Connaissance could be seen as part of such cultivation: a library, an information platform, a dynamic realm of knowledge, a sensual and interactive reading room.

In the garden's second year the books have grayed, and mold now rivals the cultivated mushrooms. Visitors have eternalized themselves and their loves with scribbles, tags, and other marks. "Marcel and Amanda," an aphorism, or the enthusiasm for a boy-band have been submitted to the garden's particular destiny of time.

*Pleurotus columbinus* (Blue Oyster), *Pleurotus djamor* (Pink Oyster), *Pleurotus ostreatus* (Pearl Oyster), *Pleurotus pulmonarius* (Phoenix, Indian Oyster), and *Stropharia rugoso-annulata* (Wine Cap).

Collaborators: Laura Strandt, Maïke Jungvogel (100land). Realization on site: Johanna Ballhaus, Elisabeth and Jessica Charbonneau, Sandrine Perrault.

### Note

1. Ranked among the leading garden festivals in the world, the International Garden Festival at Les Jardins de Métis/Reford Gardens in Grand-Métis, Quebec presents temporary gardens at the cutting edge of garden design, landscape, architecture, design, and environmental art. Launched in 2000, the International Garden Festival has presented 110 gardens by more than 200 designers from 15 countries and has attracted more than 900,000 visitors. [www.refordgardens.com/english/festival/edition.php](http://www.refordgardens.com/english/festival/edition.php)