



Oh behold! And hold!  
For our body moves with you  
Cinnamon nutmeg

#### part 41 (carriers)

The exhibition is all tangled up. The first time I visit Klemm's, a gallery in Berlin's Kreuzberg, I enter an atmosphere of productive disorder: drawings and collages aggregate in piles, while half-worked textiles lie shapelessly on the floor. Cables emanate like long tendrils from sewing machines and sound equipment. So, too, do the people unfurl. Upon my arrival, numerous hands (those of Bas, Gijsje, Jochem, Kim and Lyckle) reach out to mine in greeting. Before we've even had chance to sit down, we launch immediately into conversation about the project, almost by accident, as a flurry of thoughts and ideas spill over. Soon, we gather ourselves around a table, as coffee is prepared in a stovetop pot and a bar of chocolate is broken up into shareable fragments.

This cheerful chaos is reflected in both the name and practice of 'it is part of an ensemble', the ever-shifting collective who, for two weeks, are calling Klemm's their living and workspace. This particular mycorrhizal entanglement of ideas, drawings, envelopes, music, electronics,

"I search for fugitive moments of entanglement in the midst of institutionalized alienation. These are sites in which to seek allies. One might think of them as latent commons. They are latent in two senses: first, while ubiquitous, we rarely notice them, and second, they are undeveloped. They bubble with unrealized possibilities; they are elusive."  
– Anna Tsing, 'The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins', Princeton University Press, 2015

Our name is derived from 'The Language of Fashion' (1998) an essay by Roland Barthes, in which he describes how different formal parts of an outfit – like clothes or jewelry – relate as well to each other as to the body, the person that wears it. And this relation is still there, he argues, but it is no longer strictly defined. Things relate, but it is no longer clear how, they relate wildly.

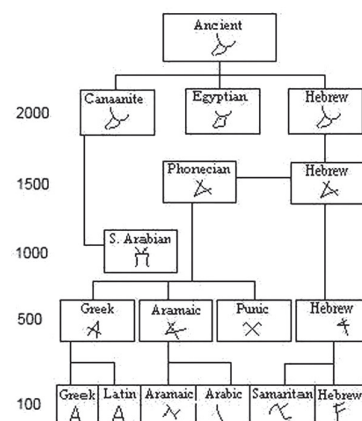
canvas bags, paper, textiles and bodies is titled 'Carriers', in reference to a 1986 essay by speculative fiction author Ursula Le Guin. 'The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction', one of Le Guin's most influential essays, proposes that the story of humanity is, at its roots, one of gathering together. Posing a challenge to the oft-touted idea that human evolution began with the invention of the spear, blade or weapon, surely, Le Guin writes, it is far more likely that the "first cultural device was probably a recipient ... a container to hold gathered products and some kind of sling or net carrier." After all, why would our forager ancestors only think to grab enough berries for the immediate present, rather than gathering and storing them for later? Le Guin rolls her eyes at phallic stories of arrows and spears, of winners and losers, of how "Cain fell on Abel and how the bomb fell on Nagasaki ... and all the other steps in the Ascent of Man." We can do better than these maiming, bashing, poking stories, stories of 'man' that have been told a thousand times over. Instead, Le Guin asks us to consider stories of a different kind, 'carrier bag' stories that foreground gathering, foraging, collecting and sharing over killing and solitary heroes.

As a storyteller, like Le Guin, "words are my matter". I know all too well how language is performative, how it materialises worlds into being. Words "do things, change things" and as such, we need to take a great deal of care with them. In Gaelic folklore, words were understood as having magical properties, capable of conjuring that which is spoken aloud into material being. That's because, as Donna Haraway sagely told us, it matters what stories tell stories, and how they world worlds. The story of the spear, however, has worlded a world that cannot be sustained; it worlds a world of linear progress, what Anna Tsing calls a "forward march" driven by domination, competition, profit and mastery, dragging all "other kinds of time into its rhythms." Just look where that's gotten us! A real earthly mess. So, Le Guin urges, let's abandon that predictable and singular marching line: it's time for us to tell other kinds of stories, ones that gather together a multiplicity of rhythms, sensations and expressions.

What is the importance of fiction? According to writer Renate Dorrestein, the main purpose of fiction is knowledge production. Fiction is important for several reasons, I will now list a few that I know off the top of my head: 1. New worlds open up when one reads fiction, and with that new possibilities arise in reality as well. 2. Reading fiction trains your imagination. 3. If you have more imagination, you also have more empathy. It becomes easier to put yourself in someone else's shoes. 4. Fiction can contribute to social change.

Reading fiction is something active. It's not easy, not everyone can do it. You have to let the film unfold in your own mind. That's also why everyone reads their own version of the book; you read what you want to read. You see what you want to see. Another thing that is very good about fiction is that it is not defined, there are no rules. Unlike journalism, science, legal language and traffic rules (to name a few). Everyone has a right to fantasize; in fiction, anything goes. There are no research rules, or forbidden topics. Unless, of course, you lived in Tsarist Russia of the 19th and early 20th centuries, like Peter Kropotkin (the prince of anarchism). In Kropotkin's non-fiction book 'Ideals and Reality in Russian Literature', he explains how Russian literature contributed to, among other things, the abolition of serfdom. Because people could not express their opinions in public, they told it verbatim through novels, plays and poetry. A social movement based on fiction.

Even though we, in Western Europe, can let our fiction run rampant, this does not mean, in my opinion, that fiction has no moral compass. Le Guin propagates for new forms of storytelling, to counter the overly common and stereotypical stories of the hero (and its extensions like the sword, spear, gun, etc.). Moreover a stereotypical story is not without its dangers. For example, by always portraying the gull as a greedy screamer, or the fox as cunning, a fish with no memory, one comes to see individuals and species that way and worse; treat them that way. I wouldn't like to tell that kind of stereotypical story, or a story where women only have supporting roles and if they say something it's about a man, it's utterly boring. I would rather tell a story about objects, animals (including people), plants and other creatures that are overlooked. At least than there is something interesting to tell.



Genealogy of the letter A

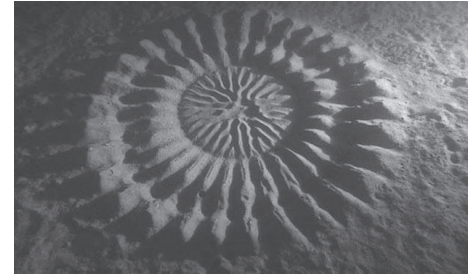
Who can read and write? And who gets to determine that? The letters of the Latin alphabet may seem like mere graphic forms without reference, but appearances can be deceiving. The "A," also known as the Aleph, Alef, and Alpha finds its origin as a bull's head. Just turn it around, so you can see it for yourself. Letters actually refer to all sorts of things: a tree, a male with a jar, a female with a spear, a bull's head, a snake, etc. Refer is perhaps not the right word. Rather, it is copying or depicting. By the way, the letter "A" is not only a bull's head, it is also the beginning of the alphabet and the symbol for "the beginning". Christians express God's omnipotence as the Alpha and the Omega (the beginning and the end, pretty much everything). In Hebrew, there is no distinction between numbers and

Carrier bag stories need not necessarily be novels, or even composed of language at all. Perhaps non-logocentric, sensational stories can afford us concepts unthinkable and worlds un-worldable through words alone. A carrier bag story, then, might also include drawings, collage, craft, speculations, music, or poetry. 'it is part of an ensemble' are making just such a carrier bag story, gathering together aesthetic practices and ideas to not only form assemblages but also, just as often, break them apart again, so that they might be reconfigured anew. Inspired by their work, this essay likewise aims to participate in these energetic processes, rather than simply reflecting on them from a distance. Ordinarily in publishing, the messy processual work of editing and commenting is concealed from view; only an essay's final, neatly polished form is visible to the public. Here, however, we've turned the essay's guts inside out. Members of the collective have been invited to comment and add to this essay as they wish. Not only does this reveal our shared process of working, but it also means that the essay can itself act as a carrier bag, gathering and collecting disparate thoughts, ideas, concepts and stories.

But lest we get carried away: the carrier bag is not a metaphor. For 'Carriers', the group have also been busy making carrier bags in an entirely literal sense. Bags adorn the walls of Klemm's, hanging from nails in a variety of sizes and shapes. Some are cute and dainty; some have drawings stitched directly into the fabric. Some are patchworked together from scraps, while others are less fragmented, more obviously coherent. One almost looks as though it's been run over by a car. I'm told that textiles from costumes, made as part of an earlier project, have been unpicked and reshaped into some of these bags. The piles of drawings and paper collages I spotted when I first arrived, I realise, are in fact envelopes (carriers of their own kind), comprised of various paper scraps. Most of these carrier bags have been produced collectively: a half-worked object might be picked up by someone else, worked on for a while, before it, too, is left for another. Art-making becomes an exquisite corpse game,

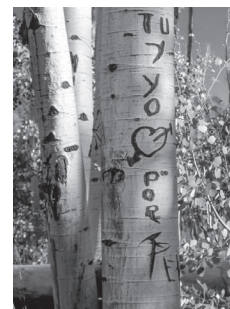
letters. Certain numeral combinations are bypassed because otherwise parts of the name of God appear in them, and that may not be mentioned. Letters represent, symbolize and refer (to) something. Thus, they are not merely abstract symbols!

The meaning of a letter depends on the (changing) context; the user and the situation. Just as is the case with written language and spoken language. In Dutch, for example, the word for "bench" and "bank" are the same, but in conversation we usually do know which of the two is meant. This appeals incredibly to the imagination, at least to mine! First of all because all these different references fuel an urge to keep looking for the origins of different letters from different alphabets and character scripts. Is there overlap? Are these bull heads found in other continents and periods? And if so, do they symbolize something similar? Is there an original primal script? A rather impossible task, one that many have already been working on, and which will no doubt lead you to the most obscure and esoteric sources.



A pattern made by a puffer fish

Second because it has the potential to break the apparent barrier between the language of humans and the language of other creatures. It is usually thought that only the human animal can read and write. But is that really the case? For example, texts of Native Americans can be found consisting of characters scratched into tree trunks (arborglyphs). Bears do something similar and also scratch into trees to relay information to other bears. Puffer fish make patterns in the bottom of the water, which in turn can be read by other fish. The ancient Hungarian alphabet (székely-magyar rovás) was originally used by sheep herders and scratched into the earth with sticks. So the tree, the sand, the sheep, ergo the environment are related to the written text. And such a specific context determines what it says. Just as for the bear, the shape and size of the forest, the types of trees, the other bears and animals in the forest determine their scratching. Which tree, where, the height, that depth, the quantity of the scratches, etc. In other words, it is all part of it. The context determines how it is written and what it says. Whether that is writing, speaking or body language.



Marks made by a human, also known as arborglyph



Marks made by a bear

An alphabet is something magical, an instrument with infinite meaning and references. With just twenty-six letters, you can bring the entirety of Don Quixote to life. The power of language shapes the world, like a bear instructing another bear.



where compositions are passed around and transformed. There are no solitary (or, one might even say, 'heroic') artists at work here, and questions of authorship tend to fall aside. In their practice, I'm reminded of an octopus's distributed cognition, where different tentacles think and operate independently but, concurrently, they are also bound together as a single organism.

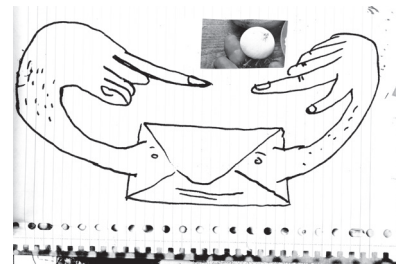
'Carriers', somewhat at odds with the mechanisms of the contemporary art market, is more concerned with experimenting with processes than with the production of art objects. This is, in part, because it is very difficult for them to declare anything 'complete'. Many of the materials that these bags are comprised of were once part of earlier projects. Any object that appears 'done' might later be picked up and worked on. This is hardly surprising: while spear stories have a start and an end, carrier bag stories follow no such linear trajectory. I'm told of several possible origins for 'Carriers': a brown corduroy tote bag, the very first one made; or, maybe, it began with a breathing and movement workshop, so the collective could become accustomed to the gallery space and each other; later, I'm told the project may also find its roots in the envelopes they would use to send drawings to one another. This temporal unruliness is characteristic of a carrier bag story, a rhizomatic form with no single point of origin; it has no start, no end, nor, really, a middle. They are what Haraway calls a "sybiography", where, as she puts it, "stories nest like Russian dolls inside ever more stories and ramify like fungal webs throwing out ever more sticky threads."

Amidst these processes of bags made and remade, we might find another kind of carrier. In this gathering of fragments, unfinished thoughts, narratives that trail off or are incomplete, through their relations, discussions and experiments, or their often improvised collaborations, a social space is produced. While that social space often coincides with that of the gallery, it is not directly equivalent to it. In contrast to the seeming permanence of Klemm's four walls, the space produced in 'Carriers' is ever in

Illustration by Fiep Westendorp from Annie M.G. Schmidt, 'Pluk redt de dieren', Querido, 2004



Will you dance and chant  
And give us scent and chaos  
Breath and life and know



You see everything through subjective, culturally specific, human, context-specific glasses of space and time (Donna Haraway argues, by the way, that by making this personal position known we can obtain a form of intersubjective knowledge, as opposed to pure subjective and objective knowledge). The world is sheer chaos. In fact, the more time passes, the more things have happened, the more energy has been burned, the more chaos. The chaos is ever increasing. In order to deal with all this in a somewhat sane way, we brew little stories of our own. You are given a name, your name is Bob, and your street has a name and we drive on the right and you are 54 years old and today is Monday, this country is called the Netherlands, the economy must grow, this bill is worth five euros. All of these are stories. Some stories are collective, some individual. In this way you have the idea that you have a little grip on life. But it can be very liberating too, to realize that they are all stories. Because this will make you aware that you are co-writing the story, and that you can therefore phrase things differently. At the very least, you get to co-determine the direction. Or is that just another story I tell myself as cold comfort?

Where I stop you go  
Treat me like you're spring water  
I am in orbit

Donna Haraway,  
'It Matters What Stories  
Tell Stories; It Matters  
Whose Stories Tell Stories',  
a|b: Auto|Biography  
Studies 3, 2019

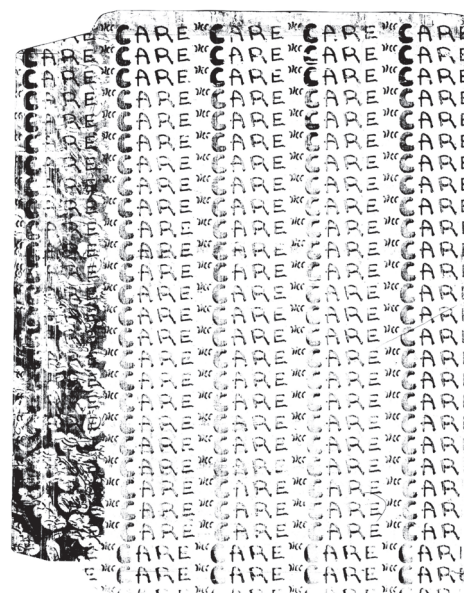
Ursula Le Guin,  
 'The Carrier Bag Theory of  
 Fiction' (1986) in 'Dancing  
 at the edge of the world',  
 Grove Press, New York,  
 1989

flux, and its borders always extending and permeable. A carrier bag has plenty of room. As Le Guin writes, "there is room enough to keep even Man where he belongs, in his place in the scheme of things; there is time enough to gather plenty of wild oats and sow them too, and sing to little Oom, and listen to Ool's joke, and watch newts, and still the story isn't over." In 'Carriers', people come and go, intervene and then withdraw, which tends to unpick the stitches. While no story can contain a whole world, nor would it be especially useful or ethical to attempt such a task, what does matter is how a carrier bag's boundaries and limits are accounted for. There must always be room for those who seek entry. This is as much a gesture of maintenance as it is creation. Living and working together also means grocery shopping, cleaning up, facilitating, and providing infrastructure and social support. People teach one another how to use and look after the equipment. This work of maintenance might seem unglamorous when compared to the spark of creative work, but so, too, might the thrill of the spear appear so when held up to the routine work of gathering. But worlds aren't worlded from singular sparks of creative brilliance or vague aspirations; as María Puig de la Bellacasa writes, we also require "the sometimes tedious maintenance of a relation."

María Puig de la Bellacasa,  
 'Matters of Care: Specula-  
 tive Ethics in More Than  
 Human Worlds', University  
 of Minnesota Press, 2017

How, then, can such a carrier bag story be told, in ways that make room for all this? Even Le Guin admits that it's not especially easy to tell "a really gripping tale of how I wrested a wild-oat seed from its husk, and then another, and then another, and then another, and then another, and then I scratched my gnat bites, and Ool said something funny, and we went to the creek and got a drink and watched newts for a while". In writing this essay, I've wondered how I can even begin to tell a coherent story of 'Carriers', composed as it is of so many trails and splinters, without losing what makes it so fruitful. Maybe this is doomed to fail ('essay', after all, doesn't find its etymological root in success, but in trying, from the French essayer), or maybe words simply won't do in this case. Fortunately, sensory stories are less loyal to clean chronologies and tidy lines than

Ursula Le Guin,  
 'The Carrier Bag Theory of  
 Fiction' (1986) in 'Dancing  
 at the edge of the world',  
 Grove Press, New York,  
 1989



In her now famous 'Manifesto for Maintenance Art' (1969) artist Mierle Laderman Ukeles lays out the distinction between what she calls "two basic systems: Development and Maintenance." The former, associated with the avant-garde and implicitly male, is concerned with "pure individual creation; the new; change; progress, advance, excitement, flight or fleeing." The latter includes tasks generally associated — at least in the private sphere — with women and domestic work: "keep the dust off the pure individual creation; preserve the new; sustain the change; protect progress; defend and prolong the advance; renew the excitement; repeat the flight." The problem, Ukeles notes, is that our culture values development, while maintenance "takes all the fucking time."

Peep pop pow pink blue  
 I think - piece of flesh - witness  
 But nevertheless

"French gardener, landscape architect, and botanist Gilles Clément (born in 1943) has given fallow land much thought in relation to defining his own practices, especially his 'moving garden' from the 1970's [...] It is a matter of unmaintained land, rapidly colonized by plant and fungal species that can develop there freely. The space is seen as a place of energies (growth, struggle, displacement, exchange) that the gardener, whose first task is observation, simply tries to balance, cooperating with nature to direct them towards their best use and increase biodiversity: to channel the competition and promote mutual support "to do the most possible with and the least possible against" [...] Could the moving garden be a possible model for the writing of the essay? Critic Jean Stobinski has spoken of 'moving writing' with regard to Montaigne's 'Essais' (1580), interestingly. Couldn't the essay be this 'natural garden', this kind of writing that is constructed as it is being written, this page and this fallow land that let ideas happen and thinking developing freely, with more concern for raising questions than for affirmation?"

– Vincent Zonca, 'Lichens: Towards a Minimal Resistance', John Wiley and Sons Ltd, 2022

essays often are, and the collective have experimented in aesthetic approaches in communication and translation. During a panel discussion (a particularly formal and logocentric generator of knowledge), an impromptu poetry reading by Samieh generated such powerful affective hold over the audience that they temporarily found themselves in something exceeding language. So, too, is the exhibition frequently activated through musical performance, as objects in the room are read as a musical score. As a live sequencer, the space becomes idiosyncratically 'readable' by the performer: an open bag would indicate a longer note, for instance, while a closed bag would be shorter. Objects arranged on the ground would indicate a lower tone, while higher positions would increase the pitch. In their gathering together of affective sensations and rapt audiences, performances can be carrier bags, too.

Display — something of a prerequisite in exhibitions, a form that only has slightly less regard for coherence than an essay — has been a source of much lively discussion. How to display a social process? Particularly one that's so varied, open-ended and always in flux. How to exhibit work that isn't, by intention, 'complete'? Throughout much of their time together, the space has functioned as much as a workshop as it has a white cube, as I discovered during my initial visit. Upon my return, however, for the 'Carriers' closing event, much of the workshop matter had been removed and the bags and envelopes had been arranged in a way that, to my eyes, looked relatively orderly. I turned to a few people who had congregated on a sofa outside to ask if this was the final hang, and was quickly informed that this was extremely unlikely. Indeed, later that evening, the exhibition was re-arranged once more, ready to become a musical score for clarinet, percussion, trumpet and theremin. I watched as members of the group moved objects on the fly: one bag taken away, another added, another yet moved to the other side of the space. A handle dropped off its nail; envelopes artfully arranged by size against the wall. The instruments, as is inevitable in any carrier bag entanglement, responded accordingly.

## من به طبیعت نگاه میکنم

I look at nature / imagine a bird singing alone / and birds singing during migration / imagine a tree alone on top of a mountain / imagine the trees in the forest / imagine an empty chair in a room / and imagine a lot of chairs, with different shapes, in a room / imagine the smell of cinnamon / and imagine the smell of cinnamon, chamomile and damask rose together

Sometimes I like to be the cinnamon alone in the tea / but do I really smell like the pure cinnamon? / someone's hands took me from the trunk of a tree / I was from the trunk of a tree / I grew up among many leaves / the sunshine was on me and the raindrops caressed my body / a lot of hands touched me / I am the product of nature's networked collective / I am the product of sunlight, human hands, the leaves of the tree, the sound of sparrows and the raindrops

I was born in a networked collective / is the smell of myself or is it the smell of nature? / sometimes people like to drink their tea with me / and sometimes they like their tea to be made of cinnamon and various flowers / sometimes I like to swim alone in the hot tea and to be drunk alone / to be honest, I tend to sit alone at the bottom of a glass

Honestly, everyone can enjoy their own scent / so sometimes I think that I really like to smell myself / But sometimes I like to play with fennel, cardamom, cloves, and star anise / I am at the bottom, but cloves lie down slowly on the surface of the hot tea and I actually enjoy to see it / Instead of settling on the bottom of the glass, I settle on the anise and cloves / they taught me to swim on the surface / I go inside the flowers / and what a perfume / and we all are drunk together / by the way, ultimately we are a network inside another network / the glass, the sugar, the table / the audience also reaches out, pick up the tea, and drink / am I the cinnamon alone?

**RULE:**  
 - CLOSED BAGS ARE SHORT  
 NOTES/WORDS/SOUNDS  
 - OPEN BAGS ARE LONG  
 NOTES/WORDS/SOUNDS  
 - TEMPO IS BEING KEPT  
 BY ONE PLAYER  
 - PLAYERS EITHER ADHERE  
 TO THIS TEMPO OR DO NOT.

In our presentations we try to find a fitting representation of the social and formal processes at play within the collective by embodying them together with the audience. Through the scenography, we appropriate the space but as well leave it open. Communal space, institutional space and artistic space merge into each other. These presentations allow both ourselves and visitors to share experiences of, and question, notions of 'collectivity', 'entanglement', 'institutionalization', 'authorship' and 'autonomy'. In a sense, presentations are experiments that allow us to reflect on 'what just happened' and create space for new questions.



On that last evening, I noticed the bags in a different way, as though all these rearrangements and adjustments had altered my perception. I spent time with each bag and envelope, wondering which parts of them the musicians had been reading, and in this I found myself reading them differently. I could read each stitch and dangling thread, and the geometry of textile patches, I could read the materials of the collages and fabric handles. Through the re-assembly of its parts, this carrier bag story had, at once, both changed and remained the same. But that's how carrier bag stories work. Fragments come apart, boundaries undone, before coming together in new configurations. That's how worlds are worlded.

Siobhan Leddy

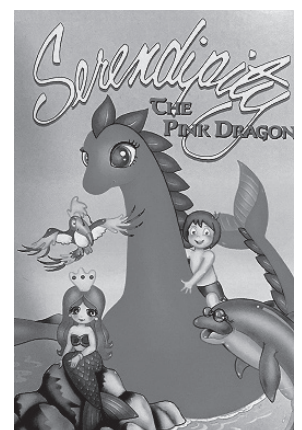
Too many colors on a fabric make a painting topicless.

internozz

#### RULES:

- ~~ONLY~~ ONE BAG IS CHOSEN
- FOR NOW THIS IS THE BAG.
- THIS BAG IS ~~THE~~ RITUALLY CARRIED AROUND THE SPACE AND PRAISED IN MOVEMENT/ VOICE/SOUND/WORDS
- THE SPACE IS CIRCLED ~~THE~~ ONCE, AFTER WHICH IT IS HUNG BACK IN THE PLACE IT WAS BEFORE.

I will not be known  
For the spectator holds all  
Me, I'm just floating.



Serendipity, the occurrence and development of events by chance in a happy or beneficial way, was discussed in the first days of our get together. We learned that the first noted use of "serendipity" was by Horace Walpole on 28 January 1754. In a letter he wrote to his friend Horace Mann, Walpole explained an unexpected discovery he had made about a lost painting of Bianca Cappello by Giorgio Vasari by reference to a Persian fairy tale, The Three Princes of Serendip. The princes, he told his correspondent, were "always making discoveries, by accidents and sagacity, of things which they were not in quest of." The name itself comes from Serendip, an old Persian name for Sri Lanka (Ceylon).

- Source: Wikipedia

Siobhan Leddy  
is a writer and researcher based in Berlin.  
Her research focuses on more-than-human  
relationality in artistic practices.



Drawing by Maki Shimizu made during the closing event

it is part of an ensemble  
are a multitude in the form of a collective. Our numbers  
fluctuate. We are artists, performers, dancers, actors,  
musicians, students, theoreticians, in different stages of  
development, different ages, different cultures, all walks  
of life. We wear the complications and contradictions of  
this multitude on our sleeves. Together we do residencies  
and organize projects, make exhibitions, performances,  
publications and teach, develop theater plays and record  
music. We sometimes literally live together, we cook and  
eat together, we paint, print, draw, film, jam, we read and  
discuss texts, visit exhibitions or take long walks. Central  
is (re)thinking: how do we live together, how do we work  
together? How do we shape our 'togetherness'?

carriers (part 41)

consisted of a collective work period at Klemm's gallery in  
Berlin during the month of august and was concluded with  
a public closing event on friday 1st of september 2023.

Fatemeh Heidari, Benjamin Schoones, Bas van den Hurk,  
Jochem van Laarhoven, Gijsje Heemskerk, Lotte Driessen,  
Jasper Stadhouders, Samieh Shahcheraghi, Reinout  
Scholten van Aschat, Marijn van Kreijl, Chrys Amaya  
Michailidis, Maxim Ventulé, Kim David Bots, Hussel Zhu,  
Lyckle de Jong, Thomas Swinkels, Mathieu Wijdeven,  
Sookoon Ang, Daniel Pasteiner, Joris Camelin, Carmela  
Michailidis, Mattias van de Vijver, Isabel Cordeiro and  
Irini Georgiou.

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