

WIN AN AWARD FOR YOUR ECO-FRIENDLY DESIGN P33

GARDEN DESIGN

THE WORLD'S MOST
INSPIRING
GARDENS

From Italian Vistas
to Indian Enchantment



gardendesign.com

JAN/FEB 2010 U.S. \$5.99



fresh

THE LATE SHOW GARDENS 🌿 CUTTING EDGE: BRUNO DUARTE 🌿 WHEN IN VANCOUVER 🌿 JORGE SANCHEZ



Suzanne Biagi and Patrick Picard's "Future Feast in the Garden of Flow/Accumulation," at the Late Show Gardens was one installation that demonstrated how, when subjected to unfettered minds, the garden can become soul-stirring art. Why not also the residential garden?

tomorrow's garden A new garden show in Sonoma, California, is cutting through the green hum by harmonizing issues like drought and global warming with high-concept sustainability and inspirational garden experiences. The Late Show Gardens has distilled the point of view among the top West Coast designers: No one's debating sustainability anymore. It is now the baseline for beautiful, thought-provoking design.

Taking the clear skies of a 2009 late-autumn day as its roof, the première run drew designers, artists, plant gurus, environmental

advocates and a public hungering for garden sustenance to Cornerstone Sonoma, the wine-country gateway and garden showplace.

Commissioning from designers who are taking climate change, terroir, drought and resource reuse as their medium, the Late Show showcased what lead organizer Robin Parer calls "gardens of the mind": gorgeous works of art that explore and comment on sustainability. Throughout the three-day event, participants gathered for discussions with notables such as environmental journalist Mark Hertsgaard and landscape artist Topher Delaney.



Clockwise from above: Shirley Watts' bee-themed garden engaged all the senses. Conway Cheng Chang's bamboo timbers created an instant allée where DIY and "custom" converged. Designers deployed reused materials, like Nicholas Thayer's wine-barrel-stave chairs, to bring a story and depth into the garden. Sustainable is modern and does not have to mean rustic, or naturalistic.



Parer's goal — that "art should animate the show" — yielded gardens that began with sustainability, permeated the senses and then provoked contemplation about thriving in our global habitat. For garden designer and artist Shirley Watts, who created an alluring bee-themed garden for the show, playing with ideas to make a point are central to her work. Says Watts: "I just couldn't do environmental gloom and doom. It's important to recognize that we respond to beauty and pleasure." To that end, Watts' installation with collaborator Ross Craig, "A Garden of Mouthings," provoked discussion of bee-friendly gardening while offering restful shade and organic honey tastings beneath swooping screens built of hand-carved redwood and Nomex, an amber-colored honeycomb material.

As soundscape, Watts played an audio loop that linked her reading of "The Beekeeper's Daughter" by Sylvia Plath (source of the garden's name) to music from "Flight of the Bumblebee" and a young girl's recitation of the impacts of the pesticide malathion. Concrete hexagons, glazed with honey-gold resin, provided a cool seat, while bees, butterflies and dragonflies zoomed in the air over a profusion of golden *Echinacea*, *Coreopsis* and squash. Rest-



See more photos from the Late Show Gardens at GARDENDESIGN.COM/LATESHOW

ing visitors read about colony-collapse disorder while inhaling scents of earthy grape-pomace mulch, honey and flowers. A tension between pleasure and predicament took the piece far beyond a garden mock-up.

Like poems in strict verse, many of the show's installations produced beauty from constraints. Collaborators Suzanne Biaggi, a sculptor and designer, and Patrick Picard, an ecological/permaculture landscape designer, welcomed visitors as guests to their "Future Feast in the Garden of Flow/Accumulation," with a concept inspired by architect Sim Van der Ryn's ideas about nature, its cycles and interruptions. Says Biaggi, "I wanted people to see they could use the principles of green design in a very contemporary design." In a classically symmetrical space, Biaggi



and Picard used green-roof technology to create a banquet table of 16 settings, positioning it at the center of nested rectangular beds edged in weathered steel and shadowed by charred, treelike branches. Organic greens surrounded place settings, and a central runnel spilled water from the table to a water garden, where it was to be recirculated for irrigation. Prompting thoughts about growth and stagnation, the experience was an alfresco party served from (and in) a sculpted permaculture garden.

"I need food for the soul, or the mind, when I go to garden shows," says Robin Parer. The Late Show's plein-air ensemble of provocative, intoxicating garden installations generated a days-long conversation about creating and growing beautifully within our means, and drew tremendously positive responses according to Parer. Its intensely local approach serves as a universal model for design confabs everywhere — as well as for all design in our environment. thelateshowgardens.org — JASON DEWEES