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LANDSCAPE OUTLOOK

Barangaroo Point



Hidden Design Festival



Chelsea Challenge Winner



U-space at St Vincent's

MIFGS GARDENS

STORY: STEPHEN READ MAILDM

Stephen is the principal designer at Stephen Read Landscape Design, a boutique garden design business focused on the wellbeing of clients, creating gardens of interest and meaning. Based in Macedon, Stephen works with residential clients in Melbourne, Geelong and central Victoria. stephenread.com.au



ABOVE
Floating pergola in Nathan
Burkett's *Equilibrium*.



Pic: John Wheatley



Pic: Louise McDaid



Pic: John Wheatley



Pic: Louise McDaid

Four courageous and highly talented AILDLM members took the plunge and designed show gardens for the Melbourne International Flower and Garden Show 2015. The four gardens spanned the breadth of style and taste that illustrates the diverse talents of AILDLM members. Each garden also came away with a medal or two, further demonstrating that good design comes in many forms.

The show-stopping *Equilibrium* by Nathan Burkett won a much deserved gold medal. *Equilibrium* took simplicity and elegance to a whole new level. Nathan's use of floating pergolas and pleached plane trees made an otherwise heavy and austere construction feel light and welcoming. I love a garden with options and Nathan successfully divided the garden into

LEFT-HAND PICS
Nathan Burkett's design took simplicity and elegance to a new level.

RIGHT-HAND PICS
Clare Mesenberg's design was a modern take on an inner-city permaculture garden.

three generous sitting areas. My imagination divided these into the types of beverages consumed; a place for a quiet coffee, a place for cheese and wine and finally, around the fire pit, a place for beer and chips. Nathan's sense of scale and proportion created a garden that successfully struck a balance between the hard elements and the planting. I particularly loved the asymmetrical colour blocking at the front of the garden.

Jai Cheswick won second place in the Boutique section for *Urban Temple*. I can't think of a more aptly named garden. At first glance *Urban Temple* seemed imposing, shutting out all but the devoted few. As you approached the garden it directed you to stroll around it; the only thing missing were some prayer wheels and chanting monks. The garden then invited you →

to move past the exterior layers and look within. At each opening you saw something different on which to focus your thoughts. *Urban Temple* is a reaction to the “bling” that passes for good design in so many of our modern gardens. Jai showed that a well-designed garden using natural elements and forms can facilitate our well-being and peace of mind.

Brett Robinson's *Avant Garden* came third in the Boutique Gardens. Brett's eye for detail shone through in this garden. Without architecture to relate to it is often difficult to link a show garden back to something more substantial. Brett's solution was to include simple detailing on the back wall. Shadow lines formed by grooves in the wall linked to the placement of objects including a raised bed and floating

THIS PAGE
Brett Robinson's design had subtle level changes in both structure and planting.

deck. Subtle level changes in both structure and planting created a dynamic edge to an otherwise peaceful and subdued landscape. I particularly enjoyed the palette of blue-green foliage. Brett confidently mixed natives with hardy exotics demonstrating there is no need to be a slave to natives to achieve a modern Australian aesthetic.

Clare Mesenberg, along with fellow Holmesglen TAFE students Veronica Bosque and Joe Zorzi, won second place in the Achievable Gardens for *Urban Oasis*. A modern take on an inner-city permaculture garden, Clare and the team used a mixture of edibles, companion plants and other ornamentals. The garden was based on a 'keyhole' design with a sunken central courtyard surrounded by garden beds overflowing with easy to reach produce.



PICS: Brooke Hobbs





Pics: Louise McDaid



A large sculpture gave focus to the garden, drawing you into the centre, with citrus and olive trees working well as the structural backdrop. The rest of the planting was an eclectic mix of colour and texture and would feel right at home in the nearby inner-city suburb of Carlton. There was a lot of love for this garden from the general public as it also won the People's Choice for this section.

For all four designers, this was their first experience exhibiting at MIFGS which makes their success even more commendable. Nothing can prepare you for the sacrifice or the many rewards of building a show garden and I am certain they have all come away richer from the experience. **LD**

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Jai Cheswick's *Urban Temple*; at each opening there was something different on which to focus your thoughts.

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