

David Cotterrell: The Big Issue : Artists get their Hands Dirty

The Big Issue

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If you've got access to a garden or open space, then summer is the time to get out there and become one with nature, and that seems to apply to artists too. In separate initiatives, two of London's lesser known gardens are playing host to different groups of over 20 artists. Each have made works in all media inspired by and installed within their leafy surrounds.

Already open is *Diversion* at the Museum of Garden History, set in the church and grounds of St Mary-at-Lambeth in southwest London. Organised by Danielle Arnaud Contemporary Art and part of the Vauxhall Festival, the show includes works situated both inside and outside the museum.

David Cotterrell's video installation, *Shangri-La*, with a soundtrack by Jim Copperthwaite, pays homage to the unique ways in which people have personalised their uniform terraced houses and gardens. Theo Kaccoufa has added a kinetic element to the garden by making one of the trees unexpectedly rotate. Shane Waltener has made a soundpiece incorporating birdsong and Adam Thompson has created a black flag with the image of an extinct lily [sic] and installed it at half mast on an eight metre flagpole outside the church tower.

Not only has it prompted enquiries about who has died but it has also become a backdrop for the BBC weather. Following on from a similar show organised last year, the project has proved so successful that it's now set to become a regular feature during the Vauxhall Festival, and has also sparked off a new initiative to host artists' residences at the museum.

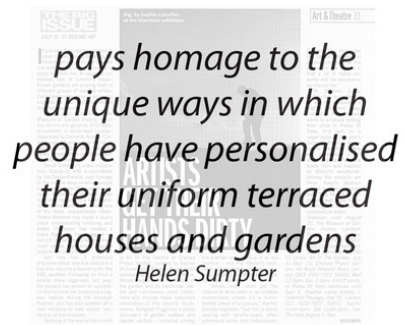
Opening at the end of the month is *Art In The Garden* at Chelsea Physic Garden, curated by Rachel Dickson and Emma Russell with sponsorship from GlaxoSmithKline. Artists' responses to the history of the garden and its medicinal, edible and carnivorous plant collections will include Hana Sakuma's installation of tiny ceramic mushrooms, Margaret Higginson's photodocument of garden workers and regular visitors - installed among the scented waxy residue of an old beehive - and Pip Phelan's flick-book of the garden's changing seasons installed in a What The Butler Saw-style machine.

"Artists don't often get the chance to show work in an outdoor environment unless it's a monumental piece of sculpture," Rachel Dickson explains, "but this is about dealing with smaller-scale, often ephemeral works and installations."

Gardens like these are still largely undiscovered places, and part of the appeal for the visitors is that a lot of these artworks will be discovered by chance too."

At Stephen Lacey Gallery they're combining art and the outdoors in a slightly different way. Instead of installing art works in a natural setting, their show *In Praise of Trees*, first seen on a larger scale at this year's Salisbury Festival, brings nature into the gallery with a selection of art, architecture and furniture made from and inspired by Britain's woodlands. Among the exhibits are Peter Rand's abstract carved wooden sculpture and Chris Drury's wheel shaped wall work incorporating text and objects collected on walks.

Helen Sumpter



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