

ISSUE 60 | SUMMER 15

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## LANDSCAPE OUTLOOK

Grand Designs Live



One Central Park



Visit Mexico and Cuba



Student Focus

Print post approved 100000801

# AILD M AT GRAND DESIGNS LIVE MELBOURNE

STORY: STEPHEN READ MAILDM



## What a rush!

If there was an extreme sport in landscape design it would be the show garden! Preparations take many months and the event itself is over in no time at all. To succeed, you rely on the unwavering support of loved ones, friends and sponsors. You need to think on your feet and be prepared for things to go wrong and to celebrate the few things that go your way. As with major sporting events, show gardens build a strong sense of camaraderie and sportsman-like mutual respect for the effort and sacrifice required.

## The gardens

Ruth Czermak designed two contrasting gardens. **Playpolititan** represented an elegant inner-city courtyard or rooftop garden. Simple geometry was used to successfully integrate family life with stylish furniture in a contemporary setting. Whatever the style, it is important to include the opportunity for play and for children to experience the garden. With **Playpolititan**, Ruth

**ABOVE**  
Playpolititan by Ruth Czermak of Botanical Traditions

seamlessly incorporated a stylish sand pit and shallow pool to encourage imagination and play, as well as textural plants to stimulate the senses.

Ruth's second garden, **Lush**, was a fairy garden. A place for children's imaginations to run wild. Promoting the 'loose parts' theory, the garden was packed full of flowers, stones, sand, buckets and other items to stimulate the imagination and encourage natural play. **Lush** was definitely a hit with the kids; many of the younger ones assumed that fairies were actually living in the garden and others couldn't resist ducking under the barrier to play in the sandpit or smell the herbs. Ruth's own daughter got into the act and spent a morning playing in the sandpit completely oblivious to the activity around her. Ruth also incorporated interactive elements at the edges of her design and encouraged the kids (including us big kids) to play with the xylophone and an upmarket version of the can and string telephone.

Ryan Young's garden, **Sitatara**, was a modern take on a traditional tea house. Ryan

used an asymmetrical balance of linear and circular forms, creating a gentle rhythm that flowed through the garden. The dark background colour gave the space a feeling of unity and allowed Ryan to successfully use a bold combination of orange and purple highlights throughout the garden. I particularly liked the hint of purple on the teapot. All three designers strived to use sustainable products, and Ryan's inclusion of a stylish pellet-fuelled heater was inspiring (I want one in my house!). Ryan expanded the restorative ambiance of a traditional tea house by including medicinal herbs and edible plants to ignite the senses. This lush planting was balanced with native plants and structural elements including bamboo and a reclaimed timber deck. The focal point of the garden was a random stone feature wall framed by two green walls. The stone pattern was cleverly picked up by the random pieces of reclaimed teak used in the low table and stools.

My garden, *Vitality*, evolved from a concept: 'the capacity to live, grow, or develop'. It was inspired by resort style gardens that are popular with new developments. The intent of the *Vitality* display was to show how a garden design can go beyond aesthetics and provide valuable services to the home and community. Practical ideas like placing trees to shade the walls of a house, choosing light coloured paving to reflect heat and permeable materials to absorb storm water were all incorporated into the display. Rectangular shapes were used to unify the garden and the shape was repeated in the parallel *Euonymus* hedges as well as the bench seat, vanity unit and the 'Ability Box' dividing wall. The angular shapes were then softened by the muted green and white flowers of *Helleborus* 'Honey Hill Joy' and *Phalaenopsis* orchids. Scale was carefully considered, the luxurious feeling was a result of generous planting and reducing the deck to a minimum yet practical size. I used the bath as the focus of the garden and to intentionally blur the lines between indoor and out; this confused many visitors and inspired others.

The competition was fierce and, on a personal note (though completely unexpected - none of us realised the gardens were being judged!), after all the hard work it was nice to be recognised with a gold medal for my garden.

The four gardens were vastly different, but all were well considered, elegantly designed and professionally executed. Will we do it again? Of course! What a rush!



Photo: Adrian Bellina



**TOP TO BOTTOM**  
*Vitality*: Stephen Read's gold medal garden had hedges of *Euonymus*, with hellebores and orchids in flower; *Sitatara* by Ryan Young; *Lush* by Ruth Czermak.

## GRAND DESIGNS LIVE MELBOURNE

### AILDM show gardens presented by:

- \* Ruth Czermak, Botanical Traditions
- \* Stephen Read, Stephen Read Landscape Design
- \* Ryan Young, Sustainable Landscape Design

Ruth, Ryan and Stephen thank all the sponsors who helped make their gardens possible. They also say a special "thank you" to their friends and family who pitched in and shared the load.

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