

Outside Interests

CLARE FOSTER finds fresh gardening inspiration

Garden Designer

ADOLFO HARRISON

Continuing our series of profiles of a new generation of design talent

Adolfo Harrison, 41, has been designing gardens for 10 years, having begun his career in fine art. 'I was creating installations responding to architecture and people, and ran a gallery for site-specific art,' he says. One of his friends, a landscape contractor, would help build the pieces and it made Adolfo realise that creating a garden was not so very different: 'Designing a garden is a similar exercise – you try and diagnose the space, find out about the history, the building and the owners,

Theatrical as well as fun, Adolfo's designs combine plants, architecture and art in a thoughtful way

then come up with a concept that knits everything together.' He started working on garden projects with his friend and was hooked, so enrolled on a year's course at The English Gardening School and spent the following year working there at Chelsea Physic Garden. He then continued studying part time to get the RHS Level 2 Certificate in Horticulture.

Adolfo has designed many city gardens for clients typically in their thirties and forties with strong ideas about design and how they want to use their gardens. Theatrical as well as fun, his gardens combine plants, architectural elements and art in a thoughtful way – sustainability and ecology are central to his ethos. With Darryl Moore, he also designs public spaces, including community projects and garden installations, under the name Cityscapes. Current projects include a garden and horticultural training programme for Wandsworth Prison, where they are turning Tarmac exercise grounds into productive green spaces for growing fruit and vegetables, and a river station on the Thames that will house a two-storey garden.



INSPIRATION

Although he was brought up in Britain, Adolfo's mother is from the Canary Islands, and one of his heroes is César Manrique, an artist, architect, landscaper and environmental activist from Lanzarote. 'He was a polymath,' says Adolfo. 'If you apply the same way of thinking across the disciplines, it means you can be so much more creative. Gardens are so important, particularly in the city. People look out on their gardens all year round, so it has to be a composition that excites them. The garden is the most important room in the house.' adolfoharrison.com ▷