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GARDENS OF DELIGHT, GARDENS OF DELIRIUM

The International Garden Festival at Chaumont attracted imaginative contributions from Italy, Netherlands, Ireland, England, the US and France

Paradis terrestre, Mag Mell by Rita Higgins and Peter Little



The 21st edition of the International Garden Festival, in the grounds of the Domaine of Chaumont-sur-Loire, invited designers to respond to the theme of Gardens of Delight, Gardens of Delirium. Many attempted to conjure up images of the Garden of Eden or Arcadian landscapes while others went for more sensory interpretations. For the past four years, the summer night openings at Chaumont have been a big success, with the gardens being illuminated by lighting designer Sylvain Bigot and installed by Citeos using Philips LED technology. As always there were gardens that made people talk and think – and none more so that the British entry in the ‘front of Chateau’ position (pictured), which had French visitors positively jumping up and down with delight. The Domaine of Chaumont has this year added a new 10 hectare site called the Pres du Goualoup which will, in time, hold a collection of more permanent and larger garden spaces to complement the festival gardens. The first – a Chinese-inspired garden by Che Bing Chiu – opened this year and more will follow. www.domaine-chaumont.fr →

Locus genii, le génie est partout (the genie is everywhere) by Christina Mazzucchelli, Alice Strada, Alberto Callari, Eugenia Garavaglia, Sandro Degni and Alessandro Muzzi

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CONCEPTUAL GARDENS



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CONCEPTUAL GARDENS

1. LIBERTÉ, EGALITÉ ET FRATERNITÉ (LIBERTY, EQUALITY AND FRATERNITY)

England: *Sim Flemons and John Warland*

Who would have thought that an army of copper-painted gnomes complete with miniature wooden gardening rakes could have such an effect. Given the not always easy ‘front of chateau’ position, the British gnomes successfully staged their own revolution – after years of being ridiculed, and shunned from polite gardening society at home, they travelled to France to put forward their simple manifesto: an end to discrimination and the right to live peacefully underground. The French visitors totally ‘got’ this garden at first glance and clapped their hands in delight at the interpretation of their own country’s motto that had its origins in the French Revolution.

2. LE JARDIN DES RENARDS ROUGES (THE GARDEN OF THE RED FOXES)

United States: *Susan Frye, Katya Crawford and Veree Parker Simons*

Playing on our mixed feelings towards foxes, it demonstrated the animal’s enigmatic qualities – prowling in our world, yet wary of it and us. The ‘forest’ was made using silver birch trees underplanted with ferns and *Alchemilla mollis*. The blackness of the water

increased the sense of inapproachability and the fox silhouettes in the trees and over the water made this a concept garden that was immediately readable and worked really well with the lighting.

3. LE JARDIN DE LA BIÈRE (BEER GARDEN)

Netherlands: *Joost Emmerik*

Architect Joost Emmerik came up with the simple but fun idea of taking the ingredients of beer, barley, hops and water and making a ‘beer garden’ out of them. The barley, represented by *Hordeum jubatum*, gave a long-lasting display; the water was contained in a rectangular tank and the hops were trained up rustic poles. On a table there was a jar of yeast – which, apparently, is all it would take to transform the ingredients of the garden into 200 litres of beer. The delirium induced would continue well after the end of October when the show closes.

4. TOI ET MOI, UNE RENCONTRE (YOU AND ME, AN ENCOUNTER)

France: *Nicolas Degennes*

Given ‘carte blanche’ at the show this year, perfume guru Nicolas Degennes of Parfums Givenchy filled the central

pool with heady scents in this surprising graphic garden of slate, red painted trees and a background of black sparkling surfaces. The idea was to create an intimate space for lovers and the messages hung from the trees reinforced the idea of secret encounters.

5. LES CHRYSADÉLIRES (THE CHRYSALIS HOUSES)

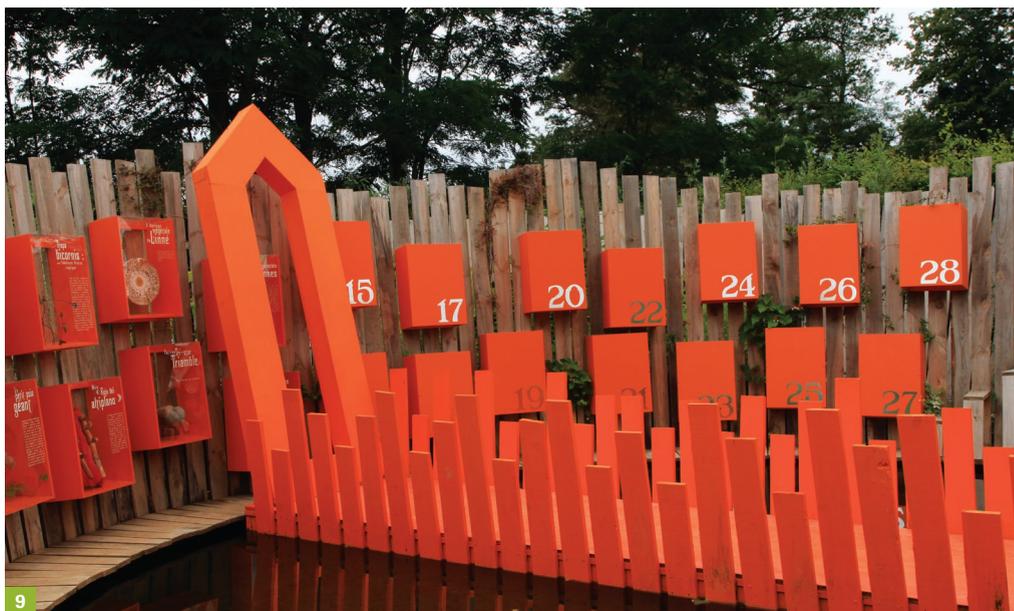
France: *Laurent Fayolle and Noel Pinsard*

The whole garden was designed to make the visitor believe they were on the same scale as an insect, with giant woven webs and traps set to catch moths as darkness falls. This garden captured the imagination with its warnings not to stray too far from the paths. Two giant chrysalis (the pupa stage of a butterfly) constructed like double deckchairs were lit to great effect at night.

6. PARADIS TERRESTRE MAG MELL

Ireland: *Rita Higgins and Peter Little*

‘Mag Mell’ is a mythical island lying to the west of Ireland, dreamed up by the designers, where pleasure abounds, happiness is everlasting and drink ever flowing. The visitor makes their way along the spiral wooden paths past streams and luxuriant foliage to the central pod →



at the heart of this mystical interpretation, in what could be the Irish equivalent of the Ancient Greeks' Elysium or the Vikings' Valhalla.

7. EMERAUDE (EMERALD)

France: Dauphins Architecture: Faïçal Oudor and Hugues Joinau; Quentin Geffroy

The smooth adobe wall with its inaccessible planted roof was intriguing, but the message seemed to be a strongly environmental one about the important crops and plants on which human life depends – fruits, sunflowers, maize, castor oil plants – the essentials of the world. It was less about delirium and delight than some of the other gardens but the execution of the 'earthen reef' structure and the planting made it a good space to be in.

8. LOCUS GENII, LE GÉNIE EST PARTOUT (THE GENIE IS EVERYWHERE)

Italy: Christina Mazzucchelli, Alice Strada, Alberto Callari, Eugenia Garavaglia, Sandro Degni and Alessandro Muzzi.

The Italian team had one of the key sites overlooking the river Loire, although the visitor's interest was held within rather than without the garden. This was a beautifully executed interpretation of the genie of place – with a garden inspired by Aladdin and the Thousand and One Nights. The skills of the designers, artists and gardeners did indeed conjure up magic using mosaic floors, metal screens and diaphanous material and water to create a garden where the genie him (or her) self can be free to wander. A nice notion and one that children particularly seem to be entranced by.

9. LE CALENDRIER DES SEPT LUNES (THE CALENDAR OF SEVEN MOONS)

France: RCP Design Global: Régine Charvet Pello; Alix de Saint Venant, Marc de Ferrière le Vayer, Xavier Matthias.

The creative team – which included a market gardener, a professor and a Chateau owner – took the idea that during the time the Chaumont Festival gardens are open (April to October) seven moons pass through the skies and there are 28 openings on a crescent moon. This bright and graphic interpretation of a giant calendar was a great hit with children because of its clear message and bold execution. ○