

# Garden talk

Tony Heywood

## An alternative view

**I AM AN ARTIST. I AM ALSO A GARDENER.** And I often blend the two in my work – which is often called ‘conceptual’ or ‘horticultural installation art’. In recent years, the RHS shows have welcomed more conceptual thinking (indeed there are now categories for such gardens at Hampton Court Palace Flower Show and RHS Show Tatton Park), but can these gardens really relate to ‘real’, domestic gardens?

I think they can. They may look quite different, and have been conceived in a totally different way, but it is how the medium – of a garden – is expressed that is important to me. My work includes many of the same elements as conventional, ‘normal’ gardens, but my desire is to involve a totally different process of conceptualisation and execution.

At this month’s Tatton Park show, I will be representing a reconnected, emotional involvement with three of my favourite UK landscapes – Formby in Merseyside, the Jurassic Coast, Dorset and Tintagel in Cornwall. Since last autumn, I have been working on creating three abstract landscapes using, among other things, high-tech simulation eyewear to generate them. These conceptual garden forms allow me, and hopefully show visitors, to engage with landscape and environment in ways that the traditional garden does not offer. How such conceptual gardens are viewed and discussed is what gives them meaning.

Such an approach has led me to develop an extreme collage-based language, reflecting a sort of cut-and-paste age in which we increasingly encounter landscape only on television or in films, magazines and computer games – often in an highly exaggerated and hyper-real form. They are exaggerations, alterations of nature, if you like.

When working as a garden designer, I appreciate that there is a need to use conventional landscape ideas and language. And so too in domestic gardens; my work doesn’t suggest that everyone would (or should) have a conceptually created outside space. But I hope viewers who experience my alternative garden world are both visually stimulated and also connected in some way with the emotion and concept behind it. My ultimate hope is that this approach can present a new landscape experience, which will in turn encourage gardeners of all interests to express their own authorial voices. ■

*Tony Heywood* is a conceptual artist represented by the Fine Art Society, New Bond Street, London. ● See also News, p453



JOHN SLEMAN

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**RHS Show Tatton Park** runs from 21–25 July. Tony Heywood’s garden is supported by Northwest Regional Development Agency. To watch a video of Tony making his garden, and for more show information, visit: [www.rhs.org.uk/tattonpark](http://www.rhs.org.uk/tattonpark)