

# APERTURA

*Latin for opening....*

**The most evocative gardens, the memorable ones, the ones you just have to ‘experience’ rather than simply ‘see’, they seem to have a sense of mystery - a ‘what lies beyond’ quality, we have explored that notion with this garden. You want to go into, or around, to take a peek behind, because you can’t see it all at first glance. You can sense that there is more.....**

## PLANTS ARE KING

We have always been excited by the use of plants in a garden, not as a touch of softening or greenery at the end of ‘the build’, but as an architectural inclusion in the composition of the design elements of the space itself. For us, the last decade has made the idea of the use of plants as design elements in the garden even more crucial as the remaining spaces available to create gardens shrink and plants need to perform more roles. Buildings, pools, covered entertaining areas and just far fewer square metres for garden or green areas, has made us focus even more on how living elements can provide the bones of the garden - blurring the lines between built form, hardscape and softscape.

Designed and grown especially for the show, to create an immediate sense of establishment, the espaliered olive forms a connection with the pergola proportions, to further play with the idea of the ‘green’ built form and the surrounding softscape elements being blurred but ultimately quite connected, integral and cohesive. The frame for this unique espalier 5400 metres long and 2700 tall, designed by Vivid design, built by Semken landscaping was handed on to Merrywood plants, 3.5 years ago for them to perform their magic.... It now forms the living centrepiece of the garden - the living sculptural form, without using a sculpture. It attracts the eye but also serves to raise more questions of what is hidden behind! Buxus spherical forms echo the aperture void with a comfortable rhythm. We haven’t sought to employ contrast in the plantings, selecting more harmonious, tone on tone combinations to allow the eye to register the subtleties of texture and form so as not to detract from the aperture’s sculptural punch.

## METHODOLOGY

We love classic materials. Victorian centric materials in particular, Port Fairy bluestone and recycled local red bricks. We have been drawn to the same palette for our whole career, before they were trendy. We have an obligation to follow the leads from architecture, landscape context, our clients personalities and of course sustainability more so than following fashion or the socials. Fashion is for frocks, gardens use up more resources than frocks, so our thinking follow that gardens should be evolving have longevity to justify the use of materials in the first place.... No point in claiming the use of the word ‘sustainability’, if you are not designing and installing beautiful, purposeful spaces that last for 30-50years+ Far too many gardens get demolished because of these garden fashion trends.

This design relies on an evergreen structure to create the skeletal ‘architecture’, creating mass where we want it and then we add flesh to those other bones with seasonal interest and voluptuousness, spilling, often overflowing, for the people, the birds and the bees. I am not sure whether it’s the combination of Joby and my personalities or aesthetics but we seem to spend a lot of time creating lines and forms and then putting in plants that wilfully threaten to break them... they never quite do but the tension and juxtaposition makes us really happy! That seasonal softness benefits from the steadfast structure and vice versa. We love the feeling and form of canopy trees, good evergreen reliable mass that holds your attention and then whimsy, movement, romance and noise oozing out of the spaces in between. Always have.

## LIGHT

This site was carefully selected for the amount of sunlight during show hours for that time of year. The design revolves around the ‘Aperture’ espalier orientated to receive the maximum light for the visitors experience. We still find it inspiring at MIFGS, 27 years on, manipulating the visitors perceptions, with the plants and the locations that we choose. We wanted the front of the garden to be an open, liveable, lively, light and sunny spot where the silvers reflect, the grasses sway and the palette reads as sun-seeking. The open lawn is for play or afternoon sleeps in the sun or shade on a lovely rug! We created a deeper and more mysterious contrast with the garden beyond the ‘aperture’, a shadier darker, retreat that was a bit more immersive and lush. The idea is that you can enjoy that space from the deck and feel a bit cocooned with a private view into an evocative and verdant space, a forest gesture with a diffused light quality created by the Zelkovas. You could entertain in the pergola or nap on the couch in peace, read a book on the single seater back on the other side depending on the light and temperature.

## FINISH

The aperture itself is both sculptural and a conduit, a gateway between the contrasts of light and shade, being open and social or cocooned and private, perhaps being active or passive. It could be a bit of metaphor to prompt us to respond to the garden’s prevailing joys and offerings, and the prevailing conditions! On that score, Joby has carved a rustic cypress bench seat for the drinking of tea, to look like it belongs more in amongst the foliage than anywhere else....but, importantly, is light enough to be carried around the garden to catch the perfect spot on the coldest sunny day or a summer scorcher.

At the risk of harping on, we are focussed on green and light manipulation and so the canopy trees play an important role in the garden and we foresee a wonderful maturing canopy (and light quality created) when sitting underneath - wherever you choose to put the bench seat as there’s no prescription on that score. We hope you can imagine the sculptural, consistent form of the Olive Aperture holding your attention when the flowers and waving grasses are sleeping and the leaves have lessened in winter with all that low, welcome winter sun penetrating the garden. It is a Melbourne garden, seasons shift and therefore you may need to shift the bench, perhaps during mid-cup of tea!