

Design for the Senses



BY DENISE O'CONNOR
OF OPTIMISE DESIGN

I came across an interesting presentation given by Jinsop Lee, who is an industrial designer and is known for sharing his innovative ideas for improving design. One of his notable designs transformed old telephones into iPod speakers.

Lee has studied the role that the five senses play in enjoyment, both in terms of experiences and products. He firmly believes that products can be seriously improved by incorporating features that appeal to more of the senses. He states that designers have previously focused on sight and touch, while neglecting things like taste, sound and smell. He proposed a clock designed by a friend that could tell time with smell, by making consumers associate different smells with different times.

This idea does not only apply to products but to all aspects of design - a building or space for example that appeals to as many of the senses as possible will have a far more profound effect on the user.

A garden is a perfect example of something that appeals to all five senses – touch, smell, taste, sound and sight. When we walk through a beautiful garden we are experiencing our surroundings in so many different ways that the impact is much richer.

One of the most exciting projects to be conceived in recent years is the Garden Bridge in London. It will be a stunning new public garden and pedestrian crossing, spanning the River Thames, linking the South Bank to Temple station and beyond.

Designed by Thomas Heatherwick and inspired by actress and campaigner, Joanna Lumley, the Bridge will provide a vital new route between north and south London and feature plants, trees, woodland and meandering walkways to be used and enjoyed by all.

The 3D visualisations that have been put together by the Heatherwick studio capture the stunning beauty and promise of the delightful experience that will be enjoyed when crossing the bridge.

I look forward to Bloom every year and this year I had the pleasure of speaking to Kevin

Dennis, who was awarded overall winner this year for his 'Renault ZOE: City Life Garden' with the theme 'Urban Greening' was all about encouraging more plants into cities. Features like mirrors were used to reflect the sky, planted roofs and a vertical planted wall are all ideas that would work in even the smallest urban backyard. When asked about why planting is so important for our cities. Kevin said 'Cities will grow and populations will expand and some cities will double in size over the next 50 to 100 years. It is important that the greening of cities is incorporated in the plans of development. By incorporating green roofs and green walls we can reduce run off water into our drainage systems and reduce flooding. Biodiversity will increase and the air will be filtered of CO² by introducing these plants.'

The High Line project in New York City is a

wonderful example of how planting and gardens can transform an urban experience. The High Line is a public park built on a historic freight rail line elevated above the streets on Manhattan's West Side. It is owned by the City of New York, and maintained and operated by Friends of the High Line. A similar project in Paris the three mile (4.8km) Promenade Plantée, completed in 1993, was the inspiration for this project.

Founded in 1999 by community residents, Friends of the High Line fought for the High Line's preservation and transformation at a time when the historic structure was under the threat of demolition. In addition to overseeing maintenance, operations, and public programming for the park, Friends of the High Line works to raise the essential private funds to support virtually all of the park's annual operating budget.



Garden Bridge
An exciting project planned for London.

It's wonderful to see such innovation in garden design especially in urban areas, I saw an interview with designer Wayne Hemmingway at Chelsea, when asked what he focused on when he came to Chelsea, the flowers or the show gardens, his response was that as a designer when he came to an event like the Chelsea Flower Show, he was looking at the layout of the show, the people, what they were wearing, their hairstyles, the café, the menu, the food, the pavilions, the gardens – the experience. This sums up how I really see design – it can't ever exist in isolation, its true success is in how well it integrates and reacts with everything else around it. You don't ever recall the specifics of anything but you remember how you felt, therefore it stands to reason that the more senses you can appeal to with any design the richer the experience will be.

Denise O'Connor is an architect and MD of architecture at interior design consultancy Optimise Design, Dublin 01 6619020. Visit the Optimise blog at www.optimise-design.com Follow us on pinterest www.pinterest.com/optimisedesign



Chelsea Flower Show
Awarded best in show and awarded a gold medal the Laurent-Perrier Garden designed by Luciano Giubbile.



Urban Greening
Kevin Dennis was awarded overall winner at Bloom this year for his 'Renault ZOE: City Life Garden' with the theme 'Urban Greening'.