

May was a manic month for me with the maelstrom that was Chelsea and the build and planting of our show garden, closely followed by my annual trip over to Dublin to judge for Bloom in the Park, now in its eighth year. A long sequence of early starts and later and later nights creates a certain giddiness that I quite enjoy until the final collapse like a sinking soufflé.

However, Dublin and its garden show are refreshing. Bloom in the Park has grown and evolved considerably since its launch, and as a result new faces crop up each year as people recognise what the show can deliver. Some designers are one hit wonders while others have grown with the show, each year improving their showmanship. Deirdre Pender is a good example of such a designer, her confidence growing and her planting worthy of the Gold medal she achieved this year. Paul Doyle showed that he is still someone to be watched with his stylish Gold winning small garden that turned its back on fuss and fiddle in one elegant tableau.

One garden stood out this year however, a composition so crisp and sharply defined that it stopped people in their tracks, including me. "You Talk I'll Listen" was created for the Samaritans as a tranquil but social space. The garden exuded style and elegance alongside the relaxing and calm qualities that the brief demanded. Its creator, Andrew Christopher Dunne, had never been seen at Bloom before and in the luminous gloaming of Bloom's Gala evening I chatted with him about the garden.

I asked him where he had been and why I hadn't seen him before at the show? "I've been watching and waiting until the time was right – observing" he responded. A measured answer and a measured design – not over complex with a simple planting palette and good quality plants, tightly controlled detailing with shimmering reflective pools and elegant planted steps.

Oh that more designers might say that! The ability to discern, to watch and wait patiently and to reflect on timing (knowing when you are ready) and on design is rare. So many feedback



WAVING NOT DROWNING

Amid the hustle and bustle of show time in May, Andrew Wilson reflects on a quiet moment of design appreciation – surely this is what shows are for?



experiences after judging run into difficulties as the designer struggles with issues of quality and objective self awareness. Obviously judgement

and feedback need to be similarly well delivered for a balanced and fair outcome.

With a background in design and build Andrew has done his apprenticeship from a base in the north east of Ireland, producing sharp, contemporary gardens since 1999. His work has been

noted before by the Association of Landscape Contractors of Ireland but his sights seem firmly set now on a design future.

He began as a windsurfing instructor but felt the creative urge to design and create gardens. Andrew has no formal design training but as a regular visitor to Chelsea he drank in the detail of the show gardens, talked to as many designers as possible and watched their attention to detail. Dropped in at the deep end by his first boss he

likens the experience to almost drowning as he taught himself to windsurf in the Atlantic by watching some of the world's best. Learning from his mistakes and revising his designs to achieve perfection produced a certain approach and at the show itself he certainly delivered. In my book, Andrew Christopher Dunne is someone to watch for the future, winning Gold, Best in Show (Medium Garden) and Designer's Choice – not a bad haul for a first timer.

I'm interested now to see if he's got the show garden bug back at Bloom next year or perhaps over here at Hampton Court or Chelsea? Watch this space!

ABOUT ANDREW WILSON

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