

# WORK



**Best project:** The most enjoyable projects are the ones where the client allows me to be really creative, and where the site or the brief provides something intriguing that I can run with. I recently worked on a project like this in Surrey, with a very engaging Norwegian client who had decided to carry out a groundbreaking Dutch barn conversion. My client was very excited about the potential of his rusty steel-framed building in an overgrown field, and his enthusiasm was contagious. My main brief was 'to create a dynamic and synergistic scheme to bring seclusion and drama to a stunning rural setting'.

**Colleagues:** I work with a few landscape contractors, but my main contractor tends to be Outdoor Options. Their project handling and level of finish is outstanding and we have worked together for many years. Brian Herbert and I met while working for the landscape designer Anthony Paul, who was my main source of work during the ten years I was a soft landscaping contractor, prior to becoming a designer.

**Best learning curve:** Doing show gardens after 10 years of designing real gardens has been a multifaceted learning curve. The process of creating a garden for a show is intense, and good for honing design and management



processes generally. These are not real gardens, however, and I have learned a lot about purpose versus showmanship. The best elements of the experience were the industry connections I forged, and embarking on my first collaboration with a sculptor in creating the HUG bench with Alun Heslop.

**Mentors:** Anthony Paul was my first garden design mentor, and he taught me that landscapes could be artistic and dramatic spaces, which could also be deeply connected to their location. This is still an ethos that inspires me in my work.

**What do you hope to achieve in the next 12 months?**

Garden and landscape design is very client- and budget-driven, and this can curb any tendency to be adventurous. I always strive to have the confidence to be true to my creativity, and I'm keen to encourage my clients to be bolder. I'm also aiming to finally make the time in my busy work schedule to become a fully fledged MSGD and BALI member.

# INSPIRATION

I'm constantly inspired by nature, from the micro to the macro scale, and this is the most prominent thing that informs my work. Many people inspire me too, mainly in their drive and focus or their creative honesty. When I left art college, I did some conservation work with the Sussex Rangers, and one of my college tutors had a studio near our office in Stanmer Park. It was there that I met Johnny Woodford, sculptor for Cleve West's amazing garden pieces in the late Nineties. I was in awe of his chainsaw sculpture techniques and the pieces he was creating, and when I saw them in Cleve's gardens it opened my eyes to how art and nature can form fascinating and exciting combinations. A few years later, I went to work as a gardener in Hannah Peschar's sculpture garden, where the idea of art and nature was galvanised for me.



# LIFE/STYLE

## Rae Wilkinson

Garden designer Rae Wilkinson opens up about life, career and her inspirations



# PERSONAL

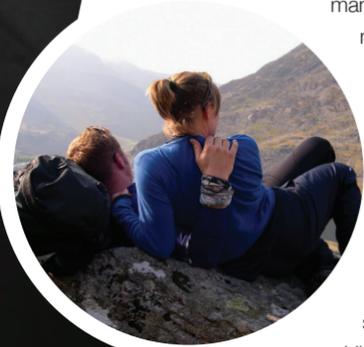


If I had my way I would spend most of my time pointing a camera at flowers and rocks, or studying them with pencil and paper, or with my hands in a pile of clay. I went to art college when I left school because creativity is in my blood, and I'm at my happiest if I'm creating or capturing something beautiful or fascinating. The other time I'm happiest is when I'm doing yoga. It's a pastime I can wholeheartedly recommend, to bring a sense of inner stability and physical balance. It has helped me along my way most of my life, sorting out gardening injuries, stress and anxiety, and I am deeply grateful for the consistent healing it brings.



# TRAVEL

I went trekking in Nepal in the late Nineties while working out what to do with my career, and was utterly blown away by the landscape and scenery in the Himalayas. I stayed there for many weeks walking and exploring, and was deeply moved by the beauty and majesty of the mountains, rivers and forests, and the welcoming kindness of the people. To this day, mountains are one of my favourite places to hang out, a passion that my husband and I share, to the extent that we spent our honeymoon climbing Mount Kilimanjaro.



I would love to see Japan one day, as the landscape there fascinates me both in its natural and cultivated forms. Travelling, for me, is about taking in the scenery and soaking up the culture, and I hope to travel more with my children to open their eyes to some new and exciting places.