

## Designer landscapes – p. 88

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Botanic projects and oversized installations at the 'Radicepura Garden Festival', the biennial event dedicated to Mediterranean garden design that recently opened on the slopes of Mount Etna

In Giarre (Catania), between Etna's snow-capped summit and the blue of the Ionian sea, the latest edition of 'Radicepura Garden Festival', the biennial event on Mediterranean landscape, reignites a debate about the relationship between

humans and nature, until 3/12, with 15 green projects, 4 art installations and many novelties. "We wanted to create a botanic park in which to showcase a rare plant collection and a suite of ideal gardens. After ten years of work and four editions, we have attained a considerable size. The young designers arriving from all over the world alongside internationally renowned landscape architects, attest to this", explains Mario Faro, the event's general manager. The new gardens were created by the finalists of a competition aimed at the under 36s. "We had a record number of entries, with 900 enrolments from 62 countries and 400 inspiring concepts", comments artistic director, Antonio Perazzi. "This year's theme, 'The plant garden', advocates an aware kinship with the natural world, as well as caring for the environment as an act of civil duty. In the gardens' arrangements, the plants are not merely instruments or musical notes, but an orchestra to be harmoniously synchronised. For this reason, a garden designer must know the natural system governing its rules, as well as know the plants intimately as living beings and not as decorations. Trees and flowers enable us to be in synergy with nature. With this in mind, the selected designers were asked to attend an insightful botany lecture for landscape architects", he continues. The common thread for the work on display are the plants grown by the Pianta Faro nursery, which boasts a catalogue of 5000 varieties. "With the project 'Shadow and Stone', we demonstrate that a Mediterranean garden isn't comprised of just lavender and rosemary, but of a myriad of species", explains Sara Stojakovic, who with Ana Toth, represents the Croatian coast's biodiversity through a gravel clearing wrapped in sun-loving bushes and herbaceous trees, complemented by a grove of manna ash and Montpellier maple. Some of these elements are emphasised in 'Alla mensa di madre Etna', a garden by Linda Grisoli and Gordon Goh. "We selected colours and scents in a happy coexistence of native vegetation and introduced species", they comment. The core of the project is a large circular drywall that frames a flowerbed with edible plants, and which if necessary, can be used as a table. Nicoletta Aveni's message with 'Inviolable Amuranza' is more radical; the circular perimeter with agaves and grasses explicitly prohibits access to humans, "It's a garden to be looked at from the outside", explains the designer. With the project 'Di-scendere', the team comprised of Marta Prosello, Andrea D'Ascola and Sofia Ronchini, has created a red ditch resembling a lava flow that deeply carves the ground. By traversing this kind of canyon one can inspect the visible roots, beyond specially designed windows. As well, 'Shy Pavillon' by Korean Adrian Wen from Atelier NOT, gives refuge to sensitive souls by inviting visitors to



hide behind his sliding curtains; here the protagonist is the *Mimosa pudica*, a plant whose leaves retract at the slightest touch. The choice of Louis Richard and Etienne Lapleau, from the French team Sylvestre, is as consistent with the theme of the competition as it is radical: in the 'Apiaceae' garden they exalt the species of the *Apium* family by recreating a wild space. Traditional agricultural landscapes are narrated as works of art in 'Omaggio alla Kolymbethra', an installation by FAI, which stages a garden of ancient citrus fruits and a plot of prickly pears and olive trees; consolidating the **Fondazione Radicepura's** partnership with the well-known park in the Valley of the Temples, with which it has undertaken research and public

projects. Along the way there are plenty of examples by the large firms, with permanent designer gardens that become more beautiful every year. The last one created is 'Vento e acqua. Tentativi di resilienza', designed by architect Paolo Pejrone, to be launched on 24/6. "I was inspired by the poetry of the Garden of Ninfa, in Latina, because a well thought-out garden is a place in which the ecosystems regulate themselves. Architecture must be put at their service, to facilitate the natural evolution", explains the founder of the Associazione Italiana di Architettura del Paesaggio. "This self-sufficient project focusses on the sensible usage of water, without waste, as an example for future generations", adds Perazzi, author of a forthcoming publication with the same name as the garden, 'Vento e acqua'; a book in which the two famous landscape architects discuss themes of future design. —