



SRGC

----- Bulb Log Diary -----

Pictures and text © Ian Young

BULB LOG 21.....21st May 2014





I believe gardening is a form of art; after all it shares many elements with painting, sculpture and so on by using shape, form, colour and tone to create an illusion, making a statement or expressing emotion.

Gardening is for me a journey of exploration - I enjoy the plants for their extraordinary variations and how we can use these to create effects in our garden but I am also deeply interested in the science behind them, what conditions they require and their evolution. The process of creating a successful garden is more important to me than the finished product. My art has also always been driven by the process involved - exploring

technique and mediums with the final painting, drawing, etc being evidence that art took place just like the garden at any moment is evidence of our horticulture and creativity. I have never based my artwork on the garden or the plants before, other than through photography, the creation of the garden itself being the creative process. I have taken a new path now and have started to explore ways to capture impressions of the garden and plants on paper in a way that the camera cannot; experimenting with mediums and techniques to express both the detail of the plants themselves and the continually changing effect that they display when planted in a mass – I will share a few with you.



Different studies explore either selected details of the plants or atmospheric expressions of the plants looking through the early morning mists. Just like in the garden it is the making of these works that is more important to me than the finished pieces.



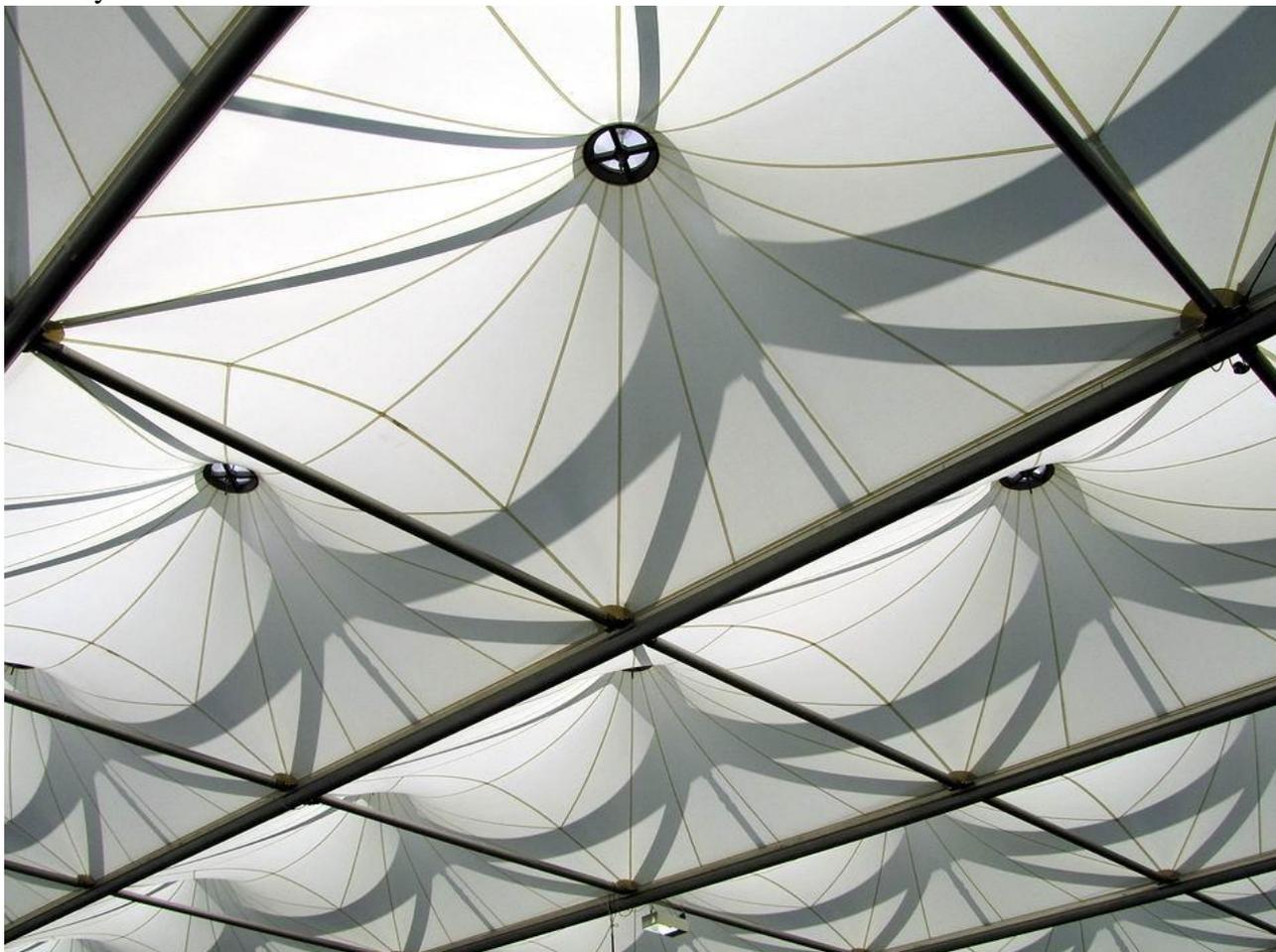
Photographing a scene such as this one, full of shape, texture and colour is rewarding and an accurate record of how this bed looked at the precise moment the shutter was pressed but using other visual arts you can explore time as well.



I visited Chelsea Flower Show this week and was rather disappointed in the lack of artistry in some of the large gardens, especially in the use of plants – there were some exceptions, like this one above. There was plenty of evidence of craftsmanship, technique and money having been spent on the outside gardens but only a few really inspired me to explore new ways of using plants. In my view plants should be the stars of any garden not cut and polished stone. I have visited Chelsea many times before so perhaps this is my familiarity of the garden designs while a first time visitor would be very impressed. I just crave for someone to break out of these recent formulas of design and do something truly artistic, edgy and inspiring making the plants the star features of the gardens and not all the very expensive hard structures that abound. There is a sign of hope for the future with some of my favourite gardens being those of young designers who I thought used plants and materials in a much more imaginative way.



The Great Pavilion is truly massive and full of wonderful plants staged to good effect here are a few images that took my interest.



First I was fascinated by the roof structure of the marquee – shadows of the components cast an ever changing pattern which moved around the rigid grid like structures and seams. The patterns changed quickly as I walked about and slowly as the sun progressed across the sky.



All tastes are accounted for from the soft subtle greens of the topiary above to eye wrenching bright colours of the orchid display below.





Scotland was well represented by a number of stands including a wonderful display of plants beautifully presented by [Kevock Garden](#). Stella and David Rankin are brave to take plants that thrive in the cool climate of the north into the oven-like heat of London - even I was finding the heat quite a challenge.



I was fascinated by the way different displays interacted with each other like how I could juxtapose the lovely planting on part of the Kevock display in the foreground with the upside down Amaryllis of a distant stand.



Two pictures with similar structures but with very different characteristics and colours.



I was fascinated by the scene created by these adjacent stands which shifted time! Due to the very different flowering seasons of Delphinium and Narcissus this effect would be impossible to recreate in a garden.



Variations in Acer



I would hate you to think I am biased but one display that always stands out as a highlight for me is that of the bulb specialist [Jacques Amand](#). It always contains an amazing range of plants and bulbs - beautifully displayed as if they have been growing in a garden.



I remember not so many years ago that it was a thrill to see a single clump of *Cypripedium* nestled on this stand now they take up a whole corner. This just shows the advances that have been made in horticulture and breeding techniques that these once rare plants are now being produced in great numbers and are becoming more tolerant of many garden climates – though I would still rather have my *Erythroniums* ☺



The back drop is punctuated with the specular flowers spikes of Eremurus like fireworks exploding over the foliage.



Another part of the stand featured Alliums of all shapes and sizes. The large ones are spectacular and make a real statement especially when planted en masse.



I also liked the smaller American species *Allium platycaule* and *Allium falcifolium*, perhaps more suited to a trough or raised bed.



The Pavilion is the place to see plants of all kinds from all around the world - there is something for everybody here - perhaps in future years the garden designers will get back to featuring them more prominently in the gardens.





Final two snapshots of Chelsea colour – speaking of colour -



before I left London I moved down the Thames to [Tate Modern](https://www.tate.org.uk/visiting/visiting-tate-modern) to see the exhibition of Matisse's 'Cut Outs' – a simply fabulous body of work from one of the greatest artists of all time.



At home **Rhododendron mackinoi** is flowering well after the warm summer last year allowed the wood to ripen.



Rhododendron 'Vintage Rose' a strongly coloured Yakushmanum hybrid.



Rhododendron yakushimanum spills out over our front dyke giving all who pass a fabulous display of colour.



Deep pink buds become paler as they open then turn white as the flower matures.....