

KNOW HOW



Franchesca Watson talks about the crafty skill of incorporating works of art into your garden

Planted Art



With nature as a canvas, local land artist Strijdom van der Merwe's organic sculptures take form in relation to the environment. Based in Stellenbosch, Van der Merwe uses sand, water, wood and rocks to create his fleeting works of art. ■ Visit www.strijdom.co.za

EVER BOUGHT a piece of art, thinking you'll put it in the garden, only to find it isn't quite right? Chances are it suddenly seemed the wrong size (usually too small) or the style of art clashed with the style of garden. Did you end up taking it back, finding a place inside or redesigning the garden?

Placing art in a garden is a craft in itself. In Europe there are whole businesses built around this very skill, where collectors have a garden specially made in order to showcase their artwork. But South Africa is not left in the colourless cold; locally sculptural art can be viewed in situ at the Bronze Age Art Foundry in Simon's Town ■ *Bronze Age Art Foundry* 021 786 1816



THE IDEAL SETTING When placing art in a garden or creating an outside space for a particular piece of art, the approach, the immediate background and the greater views are all part of the effect.

Usually the immediate background can be controlled and needs to complement the piece, for example, a simple hedge for a complicated work. Remember, one's eye is usually drawn to the art first, unless it is very far away. Water reflects and can double up and brighten the visual effect. Be careful with night lighting – rather gentle than floodlight.

But the most common mistake in displaying art, I feel, is inattention to suitable bases – size, proportion and quality is vitally important.

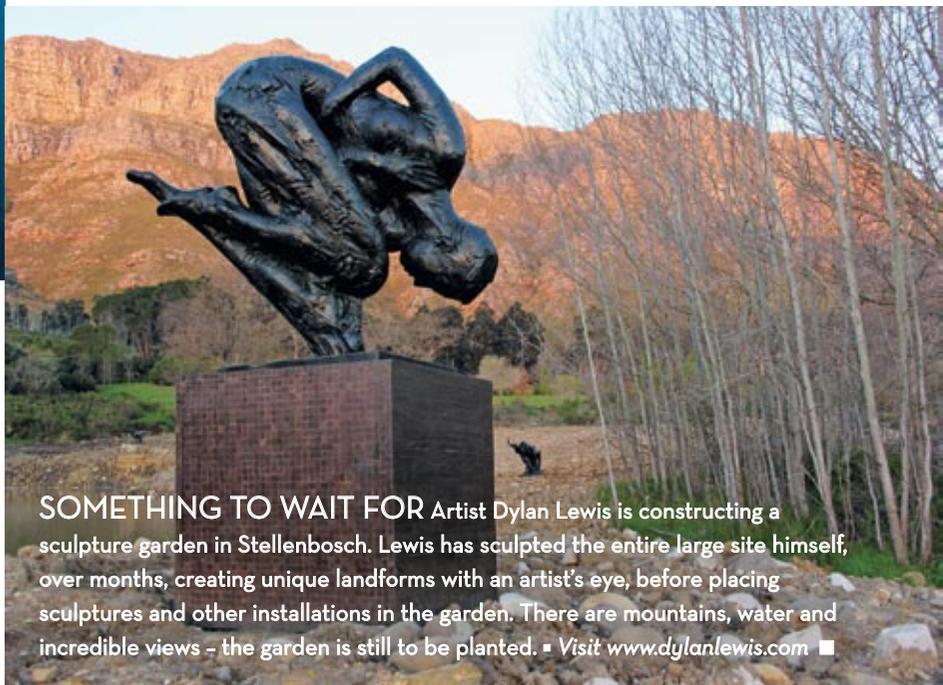
ENDEARING ELEMENTS

Works of art have been placed outdoors for millennia, originally with commemorative or votive functions, then more often as fountains and follies. There has, however, been a new wind blowing since about 1968, with the emergence of a more natural and transient form of art now known as Land Art.

Using unconventional techniques and materials in differing sites and dimensions, these pieces are produced on location and are often transitory, lasting a mere day or season. Well-known practitioners are Richard Long in the United Kingdom, Andy Goldsworthy in the States (check out *Storm King Wall* 1998), and our own Strijdom van der Merwe.

Because of the transient nature of the art, most installations are recorded in photographs and exhibited and owned in this way. I think the most stretching experience that I have come across is James Turrell's *Roden Crater* in Arizona, which is about light and the boundaries of what is barely visible.

PHOTOGRAPHS: STRIJDOM VAN DER MERWE, DYLAN LEWIS



SOMETHING TO WAIT FOR Artist Dylan Lewis is constructing a sculpture garden in Stellenbosch. Lewis has sculpted the entire large site himself, over months, creating unique landforms with an artist's eye, before placing sculptures and other installations in the garden. There are mountains, water and incredible views – the garden is still to be planted. ■ Visit www.dylanlewis.com ■

Gardens are certainly wonderful places to experience art. I think my favourite conventional sculpture garden is the Foundation Maeght at Saint Paul on the French Riviera with its bird sculptures by Miró. The garden makes great use of the views and has old architectural walls, ponds of clear water and majestic stone pines along with fabulous pieces