

A majestic piece works beautifully at the head of a long view, as shown in this scheme by The Garden Design Company



ARTFUL GARDENING

ANY LANDSCAPE DESIGN CAN BE TRANSFORMED WITH A STUNNING SCULPTURAL PIECE BUT GETTING IT RIGHT REQUIRES CAREFUL CONSIDERATION

CONSIDER THE IMPACT the sculpture will have on your overall garden design. 'It can harmonise with the immediate surroundings in tone, texture and form or create a striking contrast,' says sculptor David Harber. 'The piece needs to speak to you and provoke a reaction. It should be the right scale and in proportion with the garden: too small it will get lost and too large it will dominate,' adds award-winning garden designer Richard Miers.

ESTABLISH A MOOD with artwork. 'Different areas of your garden will generate different feelings and choosing the best place for your sculpture will help to promote particular emotions. Placing it in a wide-open space can elicit feelings of euphoria and freedom from care, whereas pieces set in a smaller, cosier area help to communicate a sense of safety and nurturing,' says sculptor Adrian Gray.

THE MATERIAL should be practical for permanent outdoor display. Cast stone and metal are strong and durable, but bear in mind that they will weather and develop a patina over time. 'Wooden pieces may age quickly, gathering moss and lichen; stone can discolour; glass and ceramics are lighter, but are they frost- and theft-proof? Consider how a unique and valuable piece will be secured,' advises Rob Jones of The Garden Design Company. Setting has a great influence, too - a driftwood sculpture may look perfectly at home by the coast; less so in central London.

SURROUNDING PLANTING should be kept simple, so the art isn't fighting it. 'The clever use of planting can significantly enhance the impact of the sculpture, or if poorly used or maintained can undermine it. Planting can also be used to trick the eye to create a more dramatic effect. A sculpture placed at the end of a narrow lawn where the hedges subtly get closer together creates a false perspective

that makes the sculpture look farther away and the garden longer,' says garden designer Peter Reader.

POSITIONING SCULPTURE takes some thought. 'The piece should be visible, a focal point, a place to pause, or a full stop at the end of a walk. It can draw you out and make you explore. More figurative forms look best in areas such as a wildflower meadow, where glimpses can be caught but it's not too obvious,' says Richard. 'Sculptures can be very different in the way they interact with both the viewer and the landscape, but it is always a piece of theatre. And like theatre, it needs careful choreography and set design,' says John Wyer, lead designer at Bowles & Wyer.

MULTIPLE VIEWPOINTS and journeys can make a garden into a magical place. 'Sculpture can be cleverly used not just as a thing of beauty in itself, but as disguised signposting,' says Peter. 'To achieve a balance between the garden and your indoor space, consider placing a sculpture on a long axis visible from a prominent window or directly in front of a window or door,' suggests Adrian.

WITH LIGHTING, respect the subtleties of surface and texture. 'Powerfully swamping a sculpture in light may destroy all the nuances of the piece and inappropriately placed lighting could create shadows and highlight areas that change the sculpture's personality completely,' David says. →

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