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Photography Derek Swalwell



FINDING CONNECTION



**EIGHT ARCHITECTS, LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS
AND DESIGNERS EXPLORE HOW THEIR SHARED
DESIGN LANGUAGE PUSHES THE RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN NATURE AND THE BUILT FORM.**



Pictured: Flinders House by Kennedy Nolan and Amanda Oliver Gardens

Photography Derek Swalwell

KENNEDY NOLAN
X
AMANDA OLIVER GARDENS

Victoria, Australia

LANDSCAPE DESIGNER

AMANDA OLIVER

AMANDA OLIVER GARDENS

What was the first project you worked on with Kennedy Nolan?

Deepdene House in 2014. Kennedy Nolan's name kept popping up as they had recommended me to various people, and then Rachel Nolan rang me and asked me to meet to discuss a project. Deepdene was a great introduction to their work; it exemplified their originality in design and connection to the garden and landscape so well.

What makes your collaboration with Kennedy Nolan so effective?

From the very start, Kennedy Nolan recognised the focus on plants in my garden designs. They were looking for someone who created gardens rather than 'outdoor rooms', whose emphasis was on the soft rather than hard-built aspects of contemporary landscape design. We both love a bold use of texture, colour and form. We also share a practicality that has an emphasis on beauty.

The Flinders House was one of our proudest collaborations. It's been a tricky site for various reasons and as a project, it's still a bit of a work in progress, but the bulk of the garden is really beginning to take shape. The extensive roof garden, predominantly planted in Coastal Tussock grass, *Poa poiformis*, ensures the landscape is read before the building. The 'on structure' rooftop planting is now merging with the surrounding natural soil garden plantings, and in time the built form will be largely obscured. The plantings are a mix of indigenous, native and exotic, creating what Patrick Kennedy describes as "idealised" nature.

Typically, how do you respond to the architecture to ensure your design is intuitive to the established design language and there is harmony between the built environment and surrounding landscape?

Understanding the architecture and how it is designed to function is important. Aspect plays a crucial role and ensuring the garden enhances and complements this. Responding to the seasonality of Melbourne's climate – the pleasure of winter sun, the low autumn light, the extremes of a typical summer and the exuberance of spring. In the city, it's about making the most of the borrowed landscape, framing or opening up views, screening or softening the ugly and creating a sense of enclosure. In the country, it's about ensuring the garden sits well within the surrounding landscape and has a sense of place.


What do you admire most about Kennedy Nolan's work?

What's not to admire? Their strong working relationship and emphasis on landscape; the way they interweave gardens and garden spaces into all their designs; the originality and thoughtfulness that goes into each new project.

The use of colour and materiality on the exteriors of their buildings makes my job a lot easier. I love being able to pick up on those colours and textures when selecting my plant and material palette.



Pictured: Somers House by Kennedy Nolan and Amanda Oliver Gardens



“We both love a bold use of texture, colour and form. We also share a practicality that has an emphasis on beauty.”

— Amanda Oliver

ARCHITECTS PATRICK KENNEDY & RACHEL NOLAN

KENNEDY NOLAN

Describe the synergy between your architecture studio and landscape designer Amanda Oliver:

About ten years ago, we came across a garden Amanda had made in North Fitzroy. We were immediately struck by her emphasis on horticulture, and were excited because we could sense a shared sensibility.

Amanda's approach was exactly what we had been searching for, a designer who could deliver an intensely plant-focused landscape design, not in a botanical or taxonomic sense, but one imbued with narrative, curation and beauty. The synergy with our practice existed on many levels, certainly in a design intuition predicated on colour, texture, form and scent and in the emphasis on a story or narrative.

Amanda's relationship continues with our clients long after we have exited because her gardens are 'cared for' by her – a term she prefers to 'maintained' and one which encompasses evolution and change.

How does working so closely with a landscape designer or architect like Amanda Oliver Gardens enrich your work as an architect?

We are delighted that increasingly our practices are seen as a package deal – to us, that is a testament to the symbiosis of our design approaches. There is a history of collaboration between architects and landscape designers from Edwin Lutyens and Gertrude Jekyll and later Graeme Gunn with Ellis Stones, and from these relationships, a clear dialogue develops that amplifies the endresult.

In residential projects, we are principally concerned with idealised domestic space, and for us, this encompasses architecture, interior design and the garden as a balanced whole. Amanda's expertise and natural instinct enriches both the experience and the result, and over time and iteration we are learning from and influencing each other.

How does it contribute to a more impactful project outcome?

The climate emergency caused by global heating is the great moral and existential challenge of our time, and everything we do needs to be informed by this. We interrogate all aspects of our practice and pursue incremental change wherever we can, but a simple and beautiful way to do this is to make more gardens and to plant more intensively, but there are other important considerations. Plant diversity, supporting insect life, birds and fauna, eliminating environmental and noxious weeds, making linkages and corridors that connect the biosphere, growing food, managing water use, cooling the microclimate, banishing toxins and poisons in maintenance and preserving threatened species are just some of the ways we can incorporate biophilic design into our practice. Amanda is critical to this in our work.

What do you admire most about Amanda Oliver Gardens' work?

There is so much we admire about Amanda's work. She has an ability to 'see' how a garden will mature. She is unafraid to make mistakes in the pursuit of the best result. She is committed and strong and sure, but probably our favourite thing is that she is endlessly curious about plants and sees beauty in the smallest native orchid, understanding the interconnectedness of all parts of the living world.



Pictured: Somers House by Kennedy Nolan and Amanda Oliver Gardens