

## LOOKING FORWARD

DESIGN'S NEXT 25 YEARS

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E LIVE IN AN ERA IN WHICH SHOPPING IS VIRTUAL. PINTEREST AND INSTAGRAM SERVE AS THE WORLD'S INSPIRATION BOARDS, MEETINGS ARE CONVENED IN THE CLOUD, AND CREATIVITY COMES WITH THE TOUCH OF A FINGER TO A TABLET. APARTMENT TOWERS GENERATE THEIR OWN ELECTRICITY, AND GARDENS MITIGATE FLOODING. CROWDSOURCING CAN TURN ANYONE INTO AN INVENTOR AND ALLOWS EVERYONE TO INVEST IN A NEW IDEA OR A CLEVER GADGET OR A SOLUTION TO A PROBLEM WE MAY NOT HAVE KNOWN EXISTED. DESIGNERS HAVE AMAZING TECHNOLOGY RIGHT AT HAND, BUT THE PROBLEMS THEY MUST SOLVE ARE MORE COMPLEX AND DAUNTING THAN EVER. IT IS A RARE TALENT WHO CAN THRIVE IN THE PRESENT EVEN AS HE OR SHE ENVISIONS THE FUTURE. AS ELLE DECOR MARKS ITS 25TH ANNIVERSARY, WE TOAST THESE INNOVATORS, CONNOISSEURS, AND CREATIVE FORCES WHO ARE SHAPING THE NEXT 25 YEARS.

WRITTEN BY INDRID ABRAMOVITCH

*In a fantasy setting of classical elements, the landscape designers who are reshaping our world*

During this era of rapid climate change, we need out-of-the-box thinkers like landscape architect **KATE ORFF**. Her proposal to bring oyster reefs back to New York Harbor as a protective breakwater—she calls it “oyster-ecture”—has raised \$60 million to make it a reality. Orff, who teaches at Columbia University, has a wide range of current projects, from urban ecological parks in Minneapolis and Lexington, Kentucky, to the mussel beds she is raising in Brooklyn’s Gowanus Bay.

With her philosophy of “re-wilding”—embracing the wild as an essential part of landscape design—Philadelphia-based **MARGIE RUDDICK** creates environments that are both ravishing and sustainable. Her fans include architects Steven Harris, Annabelle Selldorf, and Richard Meier, all of whom she has collaborated with. Among her projects are China’s first ecological park and New York’s Queens Plaza, an urban refuge that incorporates a wetland, native plants, and nearly 500 trees in the middle of a busy traffic intersection.

A former law student, the Parisian **LOUIS BENECH** has remade himself as the garden designer of choice for the French elite. His restoration of the Jardin des Tuileries in the 1990s set the tone for his approach, which updates classic French garden architecture with lush blooms and indigenous plants. His private clients include a who’s who of French society, from Rothschilds to Pinaults—not to mention Benech’s own life partner, shoe designer Christian Louboutin.

**MARTHA SCHWARTZ** launched her career in the late 1970s with a joke—a formal garden planted with bagels outside her home in Boston’s Back Bay neighborhood. “A bagel is democratic,” she says. The garden was also visually arresting, a characteristic which has defined Schwartz’s edgy landscapes ever since. Now based in London, she has opened an office in China, where she is brightening the environment with projects like her Fengming Mountain Park, which features a series of four-legged perforated metal follies that glow like lanterns at night.

Landscape has long played second fiddle to architecture, but **MICHAEL VAN VALKENBURGH** is paving the way for a new paradigm in which gardens are the main event. His urban landscapes—from his award-winning design for Brooklyn Bridge Park to the environmentally innovative parking lot he is creating for the Menil Collection in Houston—are destinations in their own right, each one unique and perfectly in tune with its setting.

HYPERTECTURE. SEE RESOURCES

FROM LEFT: Kate Orff, Margie Ruddick, Louis Benech, Martha Schwartz, and Michael Van Valkenburgh.