



PEPO

Landscape design is a serious business, particularly in Australian climates. Living outdoors is so entrenched in our psyches that ‘the outdoor room’ is now part of our lexicon. So how does one stand-out in a sea of green thumbs?

Pepo have been preaching and practicing ‘Functional, Sculptural, Edible’ gardens since 2001. They came to this unique combination of elements by virtue of their non-traditional backgrounds – neither of the directors initially started out with landscaping in mind.

Nicola Cameron, who started the company in 2001, completed a Bachelor of Fine Art at COFA before studying horticulture and landscape design. Her co-director, James Perkins, who joined Pepo in 2006, has a degree in marketing and was also a chef before obtaining a certificate in landscape construction.

Their combined skills, interests and knowledge have forged a unique and holistic approach to the business. “Our gardens are a combination of edible and sculptural, and are always functional,” says Cameron. “We always include something edible – a rosemary hedge or pot of herbs. It is a way of bringing people out into the garden.” And like their overall approach, their interpretation of ‘sculptural’ is a creative one. “We like to turn everyday items such as clotheslines into something more appealing, that can be seen as a sculptural element.”

The unique approach is not just beneficial to clients, it also attracts the right kind of staff. Cameron says of one of their landscape architects, Eve Valensise, “When selecting plants she is painting a picture which has dimensions of levels, shape and scent... she has fantastic technical skills but also a passion for texture, form and pattern.”

Pepo are involved in design, construction and maintenance of gardens, primarily across the eastern suburbs, north shore, inner west of Sydney and regional NSW. But the job doesn’t stop with clients. “Our team all agrees our involvement in community projects is an essential part of the business,” says Cameron. In 2013 they designed and installed a verdant pop-up café area at Sydney Indesign, and are currently working on a rooftop garden for refugees – a project organised by Rob Caslick (see DQ #52, pg 79) of the Inside Out Organic Soup Kitchen.

Like true creatives, they thrive on collaborating with architects, artists and interior designers, and look forward to building spaces that make a difference to people’s lives. “We hope in the future to be working on projects that give us the heart-flutter – that is, the creative process!” ●

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Clockwise from
top left / Tamsyn
Little and Sophia Ng
of MalayaBlonde;
Paddington
Garden by PEPO