OLLIE NEAVES

WHAT I'M READING

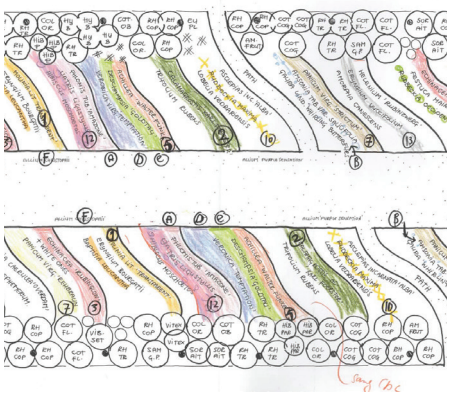
Ollie Neaves, Tectonic

Title Piet Oudolf Landscapes in Landscapes
Authors Piet Oudolf with Noel Kingsbury

One of my favourite books is a recent one on the Dutch garden designer, plantsman and visionary Piet Oudolf. I came across the book whilst flicking through the shelves in the RHS Hub at RHS Hampton Court Palace Flower Show 2018.

Oudolf began gardening at the age of 25 and soon found himself utterly absorbed by the activity. A champion of the New Perennial Movement, his bold designs use herbaceous perennials and grasses to draw at least as much focus to the structure of plants as to their colour and prized for their beauty throughout their life cycle.

The book includes 200 high quality illustrations, and for me is invaluable for providing an insight into how Oudolf works on larger planting schemes. Understanding his design



philosophy on plant structure is such a vital aspect of successful planting and in particular how form and texture are just as imperative as the use of colour.

My favourite chapter has to be the one covering the long double borders at RHS Wisley. I always revisit these borders at different times of the year to observe the planting scheme. The book has now also allowed me to understand the philosophy and visually observe the planting scheme as well as see illustrations of the planting plans and layouts. It helps to demystify an exciting approach to planting onmass in our own larger scale projects.

It has noticably benefited the way our team approaches planting plans, defining strong design briefs, using coloured graphics pens when starting an initial planting scheme on paper, working in tandem with planting elevations and helping us eventually migrate our designs onto CAD. Illustrating structural planting, herbaceous and grasses, and allowing us to observe our designs as they progress through the different seasons by using plant/seasonal layering on AutoCAD and 3D visualisation software, has allowed our planting designs to be fully developed.

Outside of the Box

I always seek to look 'outside of the box' in all walks of life, to question and explore other ways of achieving breathtaking designs.

Piet Oudolf is inspirational in the way he challenges the conventional approaches to planting compositions, using bold drifts of herbaceous perennials and grasses.

It is no surprise that Piet Oudolf was recently awarded the prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award by the Society of Garden Designers. Cementing his status as a legendary designer, Oudolf said: "Gardening is a lifetime experience to get better and better at. Like all forms of art, you can only get better when you practice. Inspiration is something sort of ephemeral. You never know how it came to you."